DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 743 CS 005 318

AUTHOR Cole, John Y., Ed.: Gold, Carol S., Ed.
TITLE Reading in America 1978: Selected Findings of the Book Industry Study Group's 1978 Study of American Book-Reading and Book-Buying Habits and Discussions of Those Findings at the Library of Congress on October 25 and 26, 1978.
INSTITUTION Book Industry Study Group, Inc., Darien, Conn.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 97p.
AVAILABLE FROM Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540 ($4.95).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *National Surveys: Publishing Industry: Reading Ability: *Reading Habits: Reading Instruction: Reading Interests: *Reading Research: Research Methodology: School Role: Seminars

ABSTRACT

This book contains selected findings of a survey of the reading habits of Americans sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Book Industry Study Group, Incorporated, and discussions of those findings by participants in a seminar sponsored by the same organizations. Various sections of the book contain remarks on the survey report by four representatives of the book and educational communities: the survey report, including a review of previous research, selected references, and highlights of the findings: a discussion of the survey by members of the seminar, emphasizing the state of research, the schools and the teaching of reading, and ways of reaching new readers: and letters written by the participants concerning various points raised in the report and at the seminar. Appendixes present a list of participants and a summary of the American Library Association Gallup Organization Survey. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

READING IN AMERICA 1978

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED182743

Selected Findings of the
Book Industry Study Group's 1978
Study of American Book-
reading and Book-buying Habits
and Discussions of those Findings at the
Library of Congress on October 25 and 26, 1978

Edited by
John Y. Cole
The Center for the Book
and
Carol S. Gold
John Wiley & Sons

Library of Congress Washington 1979

CS005318

2

MAR 21 1980

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Reading in America 1978.

Bibliography: p.
1. Books and reading—United States—Congresses.
2. Readership surveys—United States—Congresses.
I. Cole, John Young, 1940- II. Gold, Carol S.
III. Book Industry Study Group.

Z1003.2.R42 028'.9'0973 79-607089
ISBN 0-8444-0314-8

For sale by the Information Office,
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

Price $4.95

CONTENTS

v Preface

3 Introduction

5 Opening Remarks

Martin P. Levin

Barbara Tuchman

W. Thomas Johnson

Charles B. Weinberg

17 The Book Industry Study Group Consumer Research Study

19 Previous Research

46 Selected References

51 Highlights of the Findings

71 Discussion of the Survey

73 The State of Research

78 The Schools and the Teaching of Reading

82 Reaching New Readers

85 Letters

John B. Putnam

Julia R. Palmer

Janet K. Carsetti

Lester Asheim

John S. Zinsser

93 Appendix 1
Seminar Participants

95 Appendix 2
The American Library Association
Gallup Organization Survey

PREFACE

On October 25 and 26, 1978, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Book Industry Study Group, Inc., (BISG) sponsored a report and seminar on the reading habits of Americans. On October 25 the results of a six-month survey of adult reading habits conducted for the BISG by Yankelovich, Skelly and White were announced and discussed, and the next day thirty-five educators, publishers, and librarians examined the findings in depth. Discussion during the two programs focused on the social implications of the survey: developing reading habits, improving access to books, communicating the benefits of reading, conducting research on reading habits and skills, and converting nonreaders into readers. Included here are the survey data reported at the Library, a review of previous research, and summaries of both the seminar discussions and a 1978 survey on reading and library use conducted for the American Library Association by the Gallup Organization.

The Book Industry Study Group, Inc., is a not-for-profit, voluntary association of individuals and firms from the various sections of the book industry: publishers, manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, librarians, and others engaged professionally in the development, production, and dissemination of books. BISG's immediate purpose is to promote and support research in and about the industry. Its ultimate purpose is to increase readership, to improve the distribution of books of all kinds, and to expand the market for books.

The complete 333-page *1978 Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing* (BISG Report No. 6), from which parts of this book are extracted and edited, may be purchased from the BISG. Further information may be obtained from the Book Industry Study Group, Inc., P.O. Box 2062, Darien, Connecticut 06820.

The alliance between the BISG and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress for the events of October 25 and 26 was natural, for the two organizations have many common interests. Drawing on the resources of the Library of Congress, the center works closely with other organizations to explore important issues in the book and educational communities, to encourage reading, and to generate research about books and about reading.

We are grateful for the support of Daniel J. Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, Andrew H. Neilly, President, John Wiley & Sons and BISG chairman, and Martin P. Levin, President, Book Publishing Group, The Times Mirror Company, and director of the survey for the BISG.

John Y. Cole
Executive Director
The Center for the Book
in the Library of Congress

Carol S. Gold
Manager, Marketing Research
John Wiley & Sons

READING IN AMERICA 1978

INTRODUCTION

The Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing was conducted in 1978 by Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc., for the Book Industry Study Group, Inc. This inquiry into the reading and the book-buying habits and motivations of the American public is probably the most comprehensive study on this topic thus far undertaken. It covers the United States population age sixteen and over from both a descriptive and a diagnostic viewpoint.

The programs at the Library of Congress on October 25 and 26, 1978, which examined the social implications of the survey findings, were based on the conclusions and data that follow. On the evening of October 25, after introductory remarks by Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin, four distinguished representatives from the book and educational communities offered personal reactions to the study and commented on its significance.

OPENING REMARKS

MARTIN P. LEVIN

For as long as publishing has existed, the publisher has sought to understand his public. In simpler times, the publisher was often the editor and sometimes the bookseller.

Now that the business of publishing has grown more complex, it is no longer possible for the publisher to meet his readers personally, or visit the bookstores and libraries. The need to stay in touch, to understand the reader, still persists. This study is an attempt to use the tools of market research to assist the publisher to regain contact with his reader, the bookseller, and the librarian. Essentially, the art of publishing is as pure as it was in the beginning. As this study establishes, the author and the book are still the most important factors in the publishing process.

It is important to understand what this study is—and what it is not. It is a reasonably accurate method of visiting 1,450 Americans over sixteen years of age representing a national sample. It provides valid factual data concerning the demographics of the market. It provides reader and nonreader motivation and trends that are indicative. It will not create a book that will satisfy those readers. This process is an art form, a synthesis of inspiration and talent that cannot be projected from a sample into a national consensus without doing violence to the integrity of the book.

We believe this study will also be valuable to those institutions in our society which have regarded book reading as the most important method of preserving

and transmitting culture. The findings reveal that despite universal public education, there are a significant number of Americans who are not book readers. This study can be a tool to assist those organizations whose mission it is to help more readers to reach their goal of competence in reading and in the enjoyment of the experience.

This study is also valuable because, if used with vigor by the publishing community, the professionals in the business can bring the book to the reader more effectively.

BARBARA TUCHMAN

You are here in the cause of books and I am here as one who makes them. I did not begin to write my first book until I was thirty-six, but I think I wanted to write one ever since I started to read, even though it took thirty years of preparation. As a child I looked on a book with enormous respect, almost with awe at the accomplishment of the author. It seemed to me the most worthy, most marvelous thing a person could do. Through books the wide world was opened—distant lands and civilizations and the limitless world of fantasy. Far-away children one's own age were caught in strange fates of courage and adventure: the Little Princess in her attic room, Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island*. What moment in all literature so chills the blood as the tap tap of Blind Pew's cane approaching the inn?

There was the Green Fairy Book and its many-colored successors by Andre Lang, the fun of the *Just So Stories*, the tales of Howard Pyle—who that read his *Iron Men* and King Arthur and Robin Hood, and Henty's *With Wolfe in Canada*, and Dumas, and *The White Company* of Conan Doyle and *Scottish Chiefs* by Jane Porter could not be bewitched by the enchantments of history?

On a recent occasion I sat next to Senator Muskie, who told me that in the Maine town where he grew up, one had to be ten years old to have a library card. On

the morning of his tenth birthday he was standing on the library steps at eight o'clock waiting for the door to open. He received his card and took home a book which he finished that night, returned next day and brought home two books, devoured them and returned again and brought home eight. The sense of books as treasure had been transmitted by his father, a Polish immigrant, who took comfort in alien surroundings by reading books about his homeland and had already given his son the novels of Sienkewicz.

Once captured in childhood, the adult is unlikely to lose his attachment. With books as comfort and companion, pleasure and stimulus and source of knowledge, he is never without resource, never alone. He has Scheherezade always by his side, telling stories, opening windows on perilous seas and faery lands forlorn. The adult confined by housewifery and children or by 9-to-5 at the office and a round of golf on Sundays can sail with Ulysses and know what song the sirens sang, meet humanity in an English nutshell through Jane Austin, suffer a murderer's guilt with Raskolnikov. This is the reason for books, plus of course information, spiritual consolation, and the promotion of causes.

If we are concerned here with a theme for promoting the reading, not to mention the purchase, of books, let us not, like commercial advertisers, promise that our product is the key to one form or another of success—like winning love through shampoo or waxing your floors. Rather, our theme should be what books truly do, which is to double your life. They open your mind to realms unknown. They are the ignition of the intellect, imagination, and the romantic dream.

I do not think our target should be the nonreading 6 percent at the bottom. Just as public health is a social, not a medical, problem, illiteracy is also a social problem conditioned by factors far beyond our scope. Our opportunity lies rather among that great 38 percent who read, but not books. We have all been in comfort-

able, even elegant homes where there is not a book to be seen. I think of the awful emptiness of the Loud family in that TV series that went into their prosperous home and watched them slump in know-nothingism, frustration, and divorce. Perhaps a book might have provided at least one of them with some escape, some new idea. The question is how are the 38 percent to be reached?

One finding of the survey is puzzling and sad: the loss or diminution of the elderly as book readers. Can this really be true, and if so what can be the reason? Is it economics, or loss of energy, or diminished access? This seems to be an area that warrants further investigation.

Lastly I come to the cheerful if not surprising finding that the heaviest readers are the people most active in everything. The doers are the readers. They are the self-selected from whatever background, born not made, probably not susceptible of increase. They can take care of themselves, while we find ways to bring books to the Louds or vice versa. The book is a universal possession which must make its way into their lives.

W. THOMAS JOHNSON

I find it especially encouraging to learn that 94 percent of the adult population has read some type of published material in the past six months. In fact, I find [the survey's] 94 percent statistic almost too good to be true . . . [it is] almost inconceivable that an adult can survive in our society for six months without reading something!

However, that elusive 6 percent nonreader segment is the hard core. They are deprived socially, culturally, and economically. This obviously is a challenge for us and for society in general, but I believe that there always may be this 6 percent—those who cannot, will not, and do not wish to read. Containing this group to such a small percentage may be our greatest challenge,

since we know that reading does take effort, no matter how great the pleasure or personal satisfaction.

The company I represent . . . is engaged in many dimensions of print—newspapers, magazines, and books. As a company we are aware of the common challenges that different media confront. We all must begin with an accurate assessment of what actually is happening to American reading skills and habits; to me that is the greatest value of this study. It provides a very important benchmark against which to measure future progress by all of us. These efforts obviously must move beyond the research stage into what I suggest should be a "new era of activism for print." There are great opportunities for us to work together, not just in research but also in marketing and in promotion.

For example, this research shows that 94 percent of adults read magazines or newspapers, yet only 55 percent read books. Book publishers are missing almost 40 percent of the newspaper and magazine reading audience. Among nonbook readers 91 percent say they read newspapers, 62 percent say they read magazines. I suggest that a stronger presentation of books within newspaper and magazine pages may be one answer.

The newspaper industry itself is moving in several dramatic and exciting ways. Many innovations and new initiatives have been undertaken in recent years. These include new sections, new geographic zones, substantial content improvements, better graphics, better reproduction, new circulation and distribution concepts. For many this burst of activism has resulted in an increase in circulation. . . . Despite what you may have read about the New York City newspaper strike and the death this year of the *Chicago Daily News*, the state of the newspaper business is excellent. More cities and towns are served with daily newspapers today than ever before. . . .

I emphasize the word *newspaper* particularly from a readership perspective, because providing news re-

mains our primary mission. Other media can provide entertainment and unusual graphics, but none can provide the wealth of information, timely and reliable, that your modern newspaper can, and those of us at the *Los Angeles Times* believe that we should not compete with television, with movies, or with a vast array of magazines by lowering our standards.

We believe that excellence in journalism is our best chance for attracting and retaining readers. By every measuring device available to us—surveys, reader feedback, circulation figures, our own personal feel for the response to our product—there is a continuing and indeed growing hunger for information presented in a thorough and responsible manner. There are large numbers of people out there who want very much to read, and they are willing to take the time and pay the price if they are given something of value to read. . . .

At a time when newspapers, many in a state of panic over sharp declines in readership, were being advised on all sides to make it easier on the reader, the *Los Angeles Times* increased the length of its stories along with their complexity and thoroughness and range. When the recurring advice was to keep it simple and short and "give them lots of pictures," we were printing longer and more complicated stories and placing a premium on the quality of writing. We did this because we can think of no other way to be of real value, to provide enough information to enable readers to form reasonable judgments and to give them a sense of context without which its real meanings may be lost. We found that there are indeed hungry readers out there. At the same time that there were complaints about long stories, we must admit that we found also that they were the best read and the most discussed stories. And reprints of them were widely read. . . . We believe that our real task in [promoting] readership is not to look down but to look up.

Now, what are we doing as an industry? The

Newspaper Readership Project is the most extensive cooperative effort ever undertaken by newspapers. It is sponsored by sixteen professional organizations and funded by individual newspaper companies at a $1.8 million level over three years, matched by a comparable amount of time and effort and funding by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau and the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

As part of the Newspaper Readership Project, a new study--*Children, Mothers and Newspapers*—has just been released. It confirms the findings of the BISG Consumer Research Study. It concludes that the impulse to read is powerful and pervasive. That study found that a substantial proportion of children and adolescents are reading books for fun, *on their own initiative*, apart from what they do for school. It showed that children like the use of the newspaper as a teacher's aid. Most importantly, it showed how overwhelmingly mothers approve of reading as an activity for their children, as part of their very strong feeling that reading is related to the self-improvement of their children.

The readership project is now in its second year, local readership committees are also operative in 334 communities around the nation. The key emphasis is on the reader, finding out through thorough research what the reader expects today. We have great expectations of what this project will produce—ultimately, better newspapers better designed for today's readers and for attracting new readers. While we are improving content we also feel that we must improve the distribution of our products and the skills of the people who distribute them. We also are focusing ourselves on improved promotion. In my judgment there is much reason for all print media to work cooperatively with each other and with educators to promote reading skills. But I do not recommend any generalized promotion of "print"; that to me is almost a meaningless abstraction. The effort, in my judgment, can best be executed in

specific ways by each of the various media, and you can be assured of this: newspapers intend to be in the forefront of this drive.

You can expect to see from us additional research, additional editorial improvements, new and better ways to produce and to distribute our products. In 1978 and beyond, I believe that it will be harder than ever to get by in this society without the ability to read a newspaper, or a book, or a magazine. And I think it will be most difficult, even in an era of video display tubes and home information terminals, to [find any] substitute for the convenience, the pleasure, and the information contained in print.

CHARLES B. WEINBERG

The basic lesson that we have learned in marketing is that you never really market to the public as a whole, but you market to its individual segments. As the findings in the BISG Consumer Research Study suggest, when we look at the market for reading we find there are a number of different segments. We are going to need different programs for those different segments. . . .

There is another major point: reinforcement is essential. Repeat behavior is very important, because indeed that's really what much of the reading problem is about. It is not a matter of getting people to read books at one point in time. It is trying to develop an approach where people will read books over a long period of time.

There is a well-known article written twenty years ago by Ted Levitt in the *Harvard Business Review* called "Marketing Myopia." What Levitt pointed out is that a number of industries have run into severe problems and perhaps even failed because they have put too much emphasis on the product form and not enough on the benefits that people derive. Among the examples that Levitt used is the railroad industry. He

claimed that one of the problems the railroad industry had was that they focused too much on being a railroad industry and not on the basic needs of those they were serving—primarily transportation. While the railroad industry has had a number of problems, the amount of transportation that goes on in the U.S. has increased dramatically over time.

Looking now at the BISG Consumer Research Study, we want to look not at books themselves, but we want to look at the *potential* that books provide and at the benefits that people get from books. The list includes such benefits as general and specific knowledge, pleasure, relaxation, time-filling, spiritual uplift, and so forth. These are all benefits that we can see are derived from reading books. In fact the real cause for optimism, looking at this report, is that most of those benefits are benefits for which we can see an increasing demand in our society. . . .

There is another cause for optimism when we look, from a marketing perspective, at the book industry, and that is that there are many satisfied customers. We are not in a situation where people read a book once and never read it again. There are some people who do that, but most people seem to read on a fairly regular basis. Another cause for optimism seems to be that the non-book readers are really in many ways very similar to book readers. There are some differences, but there are many similarities, and we should look at these similarities. Furthermore, the BISG Consumer Research Study suggests that the market is dynamic. People change their levels of book reading. . . . These dynamics in the market suggest that there is something we can do to keep those people who are going to drop out from dropping out and to get those people who are about to increase their readership to perhaps do so more quickly. . . .

Now, what type of marketing strategies might a marketing person see for this market? First of all, one

doesn't see broad strategies for the market as a whole because, as I said before, one looks at separate markets and at the segments within those markets. So, for example, if you take the book readers' market, what might you find? There are really two types of book readers. One is the habitual reader . . . but there is another very interesting group. They are the book readers who are "light book readers." . . . Can we do things to increase the number of books read per person? There are some suggestions at least in the study that the light book readers tend to read for specific purposes. Some people read books at night to help them go to sleep. Some people read only cookbooks. Can we find strategies to make them see they can read during other parts of the day? . . .

Now let's look at the non-book readers. In marketing ordinary products, we might draw this analogy. When you buy a product, what you do is pay a price for the product and presumably you get some benefits in return. As I said before, benefits are the key to what you get, not the product form itself. What's the analogy in buying a product? Well, the price really consists of two parts. One part is the actual dollar price you pay for the book, or perhaps you don't pay a dollar price as many people don't buy all the books they read. The second part of the price is the time spent in reading a book. What is quite striking when you contrast book readers to non-book readers is that the book readers seem quite willing to stop and start their book reading. They seem to have less problems with reading during different times of the day, and perhaps one of the clues to the puzzle of how come they watch so much television is maybe they watch television at the same time they are reading a book.

Non-book readers, by contrast, heavily claim that they don't have time to read books. They suggest that it takes too long to read a book. . . . It was interesting that before this session started, I noticed that a number

of people in the audience in fact were reading books. These clearly are the book reader group. They found the way to make the price of reading books, the time price, to be quite a bit lower. I think that one direction we might think about with the non-book reader is to view time as a price mechanism and then what we can do about lowering, not the actual price, just the perceived price—because as non-book readers, if they are like book readers, it's a problem in perception rather than in actual price. The second side of the coin is the benefit side. Non-book readers are very vague about the benefits they see. It's not that they have specific complaints about book reading: they don't say it's not manly to read books, they don't say it's not feminine to read books. They just don't like it. One suggests that perhaps we can help them in terms of crystallizing their benefits.

In closing, let me just make a couple of comments. First of all, I think marketing is a way of looking at reading problems that can help us, perhaps, increase the amount of reading that is done in our society. If we are to use marketing, we must remember that we're talking about the benefits from that product, and when we look at the benefits we must look within market segments and try to develop specific programs for different market segments. I think the BISG Consumer Research Study suggests interesting and different marketing strategies for different market segments.

THE BOOK INDUSTRY STUDY GROUP CONSUMER RESEARCH STUDY

There is no current all-inclusive review of all published sources of data concerning reading in the United States. To establish a framework for the findings of the first comprehensive study of reading and book purchasing, we are presenting this review as a general background for placing the *1978 Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Publishing* in its historical perspective. At the end of this review there is a partial bibliography of the major and secondary articles read, reviewed, and considered. There is a need for a current annotated bibliography of all research in the field, and for a common terminology, methodology, and basis for future study.

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, our nation has paid increasing attention to the subject of reading. Educators, librarians, publishers of books, magazines, and newspapers, governmental agencies, local school boards, the armed services, foundations, labor unions—all are involved in efforts to improve reading levels in the United States and to create more readers of books and of other printed materials.

But the hundreds of research projects and programs that have been financed, completed, and reported emphasize the teaching of reading rather than the investigation of readers. Research references are indexed in the Educational Documents Index of ERIC, the national information system which compiles educational

Copyright © 1978 Book Industry Study Group, Inc.

research reports and information. In 1975 there were listed in the ERIC index under the general heading of "Reading" more than one thousand references. Under "Reading Improvements," three hundred references were listed, and under "Reading Programs" more than one hundred fifty references. Under "Reading Habits," the index category which presumably would list the research reported that year on how and why Americans read—just three references.

The review of research in the field of book reading and book readers does not reveal a complete picture. Some of the research was based on a respondent sample so small that results could not be used for national profiles. Some research concerned itself only with those books borrowed from libraries or only books purchased. Still other research is limited by region or by segment of the population. Perhaps the most serious limitation in the previous research conducted is that it is not up-to-date. Much of what has been done—and is still being cited—dates back to the 1960s or even to the 1940s.

Education and Literacy

There is an obvious link between education and book reading. If one does not have the ability to read, one certainly will not be able to read books. The amount of money spent to teach children to read is enormous. Our nation's expenditures for education are greater than those for defense. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, we spent $131 billion on education in 1977. This is $30 billion more than we spent on defense, and almost fourteen times the amount we spent on education in 1950. Based on a quantitative measurement, our population has reached the highest level yet of educational attainment. According to the center, from 1950 to 1976 the median school year completed by Americans twenty-five years and older rose from 9.3 years to 12.4 years.

But educational achievement has not kept pace with

the time spent in school. Through every level of the educational system, a decline in academic ability has been registered. As Frank E. Armbruster explained in *Our Children's Crippled Future,* scores on academic achievement tests in all grades in most states "declined almost unremittently in the second half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s." According to official HEW statistics, only 1.2 percent of the population was illiterate in 1970, the most recent year for which data exist. It has been established that a far larger segment of the population is "functionally illiterate," unable to read and comprehend want ads, job applications, directions for long-distance dialing, and Social Security forms.

Estimates of the number of functionally illiterate Americans vary. A commonly accepted percentage is 15 percent, based on a survey the Louis Harris organization conducted for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1971. This would put the number of functionally illiterate Americans at approximately 20 million.

But some studies on adult competence define functional illiteracy more strictly. By their definition, the percentage of functional illiterates in the population is higher. *Adult Functional Competency,* published by the University of Texas at Austin in 1975, concludes that as many as one American in five reads with difficulty. Other studies also indicate how much more serious the problem of functional illiteracy is among the disadvantaged. A recent Department of Health, Education, and Welfare study reported that 42 percent of the blacks enrolled in schools today are functionally illiterate—a percentage almost three times the national average.

Our standards of literacy keep shifting upward. Ernest L. Boyer, U.S. Commissioner of Education, explained the paradox at the September 1978 International Literacy Conference: "While the illiteracy in this

nation has continued to decline, the language sophistication now required continues to rise. On the frontier two centuries ago, a man who could read his name and also several books and messages, was looked upon as 'educated.' But today with new technology and more complicated functions to perform, a person with limited language skills is considered ignorant." On the success or failure of future efforts to reduce functional illiteracy rests the future of book reading and book purchasing in the United States.

Libraries

Since the end of World War II, the number of libraries has almost tripled. In 1945 the *American Library Directory* listed approximately eleven thousand libraries. By 1976 this number had increased to twenty-nine thousand. The size of library professional staffs has also increased greatly. In 1962, according to the *National Inventory of Library Needs*, there were 19,855 professionals in U.S. libraries; by 1974, this number had almost doubled to 36,131. Similarly, the number of library assistants has also increased—from twenty-four thousand in 1940 to one hundred twenty-nine thousand in 1970.

Also expanding are library collections. In 1962 the total number of print materials in U.S. libraries was 241 million. By 1974, according to the *National Inventory of Library Needs*, this number had increased more than 60 percent—to 397 million.

Finally, the expenditures for libraries have also increased significantly since World War II. Actual expenditures in constant (1972) dollars rose almost 95 percent from 1962 to 1975—from $449 million to $875 million. Average per capita expenditures in constant (1972) dollars also rose. In 1962 this average was $2.88. By 1974, the per capita expenditure was more than 50 percent higher—i.e., $4.41.

A 1974-76 study conducted by the Gallup Organi-

zation for the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies studied the current role of libraries in America. According to this survey, more than four of every five Americans (83 percent) use libraries. Not quite one in three Americans (29 percent) uses a library at least once every two months, and over a two-year period, more than half the population (54 percent) will use a library from one to eight times. There is, according to the Gallup survey, a small segment (6 percent) of very heavy users who use the library fifty times or more during a two-year period. Demographically, these heavy users tend to be women. Also, they tend to be young (18-34 years), in college, or college educated. When respondents were asked which kind of library they had visited most recently, 74 percent said the "public library." Only 21 percent answered "school library," and only 4 percent said a "private library" or a "business library." The Gallup survey also asked where books were obtained by readers who read one book or more over the past twelve months. Libraries placed third in popularity—behind bookstores and borrowings from friends. Only one in five respondents (27 percent) said they obtained their books from libraries, while approximately one in three (36-37 percent) chose each of the other sources.

Magazines

Through the years the magazine industry has undergone several painful periods of readjustment, necessitated by the rapid rise of television viewing and characterized by the demise of once-important weeklies like *Collier's, Saturday Evening Post, Look,* and *Life.* According to *The Mass Media: Aspen Institute Guide to Communication Industry Trends,* growth in magazine circulation, which had been approximately 37 percent in the 1940s, slowed to 15 percent in the 1950s, and 10 percent in the 1960s. Since 1970 a further decline to 6.3 percent was posted, but starting in 1975 slight increases were recorded.

While the growth rate has slowed, on an absolute basis, the picture is different. According to the Magazine Publishers Association, from 1945 to 1976 the total number of general and farm magazines sold increased from 121 million to 255 million circulation per issue—an increase of more than 110 percent. Similarly, the number of single copies sold rose from 66 million to approximately 86 million—an increase of more than 30 percent circulation per issue. The number of magazines being published has also increased. In 1945, according to the Magazine Publishers Association, 219 general and farm magazines were being published. By 1975, three decades later, this total had risen to 327—an increase of 49 percent.

A 1977 survey conducted by Lieberman Research for Publishers Clearing House indicates that three of every four Americans (75 percent) buy magazines, and that among this group is a heavy-buyer segment which purchases nine or more magazines per year. Although this segment comprises only one-fifth of the U.S. population, it accounts for 60 percent of all the magazines sold. According to the Lieberman survey, these heavy magazine purchasers constitute an upscale, contemporary segment of the population, one that is more affluent, better educated, and younger than the nonbuying segment. Magazine buyers tend to be more community-oriented and more willing to experiment. They differ from nonpurchasers, who are likely to suffer from a sense of social alienation. Magazine buyers tend to be fast readers rather than slow readers, and those who enjoy reading are more likely to purchase magazines than those who do not. The Lieberman Research study also concludes that entertainment is as much a motivation in buying magazines as information-seeking, although most buyers of magazines feel that television is more entertaining.

A 1975 Gallup survey concentrated on those who read magazines as opposed to those who buy them. It

concluded that the frequency of reading is not particularly high. Somewhat more than two of every five respondents (44 percent) reported reading less than one magazine per week.

A *Study of Americans' Use of Time*, conducted in 1965-66, concluded that on a typical day, magazines reached 25 percent of the population. The time spent per day by the typical American on reading magazines ranged then from 4 to 6 minutes, depending on whether housewives or employed men or women were doing the reading. This amount of time was slightly less than the time spent in reading newspapers. The time spent looking at television was tremendously greater, 99 minutes per day for employed men, 62 minutes for employed women, and 96 minutes for housewives.

The 1975 Gallup survey indicates that more than 75 percent of the Americans who read magazines obtain them through subscriptions. Far fewer obtain them by borrowing from friends or purchasing them from newsstands. Only 4 percent reported obtaining their magazines from a library.

Newspapers

In the years since World War II, there has been relatively little change in the number of newspapers published in the United States. The number of daily newspapers published in 1976—almost eighteen hundred, according to *Editor and Publisher*—is approximately the same as the number published in 1940. However, there have been significant changes in the number of daily newspapers in cities of different sizes. According to the *American Newspaper Publishers Association*, in cities with more than 1,000,000 population, the number of dailies has decreased 25 percent in the two decades from 1955 to 1975. But in cities with populations in the 50,000–100,000 range, the number of dailies rose 31 percent.

On the other hand, newspaper circulation has

risen steadily through the years. *Editor and Publisher* estimates that in the years from 1950 to 1976, the net paid circulation of U.S. daily newspapers rose from approximately 54 million to 61 million. Also increasing has been the average number of newspaper pages per issue. From 1960 to 1975, this number of pages in daily newspapers has, according to the American Newspaper Publishers Association, risen from forty-three to fifty-seven pages.

Edward J. Mead, head of the Public Education Program for the Ford Foundation, noted in 1972 that a study made two years previously indicated that as many as four of every five Americans eighteen years and over (78 percent) read a newspaper every day. According to Mr. Mead, even in the demographic category of low-income, low-education, and rural localities, daily readership does not fall below 60 percent of the category's population. The 1975 Gallup survey of library usage indicated a smaller number of newspaper readers. Only two of three of this survey's respondents (66 percent) were newspaper readers. This source estimates that the average housewife spends twenty-one minutes per day reading the newspaper, employed men spend twenty-five minutes, and employed women, thirty minutes.

Television

The rise of television can be most clearly seen by the rapid increase in the number of TV sets now operating in American households. In 1950, according to the *Television Factbook*, fewer than 10 percent of U.S. homes—4 million households in all—had television receivers. Today, 98 percent of all U.S. households—72 million homes in all—have TV sets, and of these, almost half (47 percent) have two or more sets. A 1978 national survey indicates that 30 million Americans watch television regularly.

The amount of time that the average American

spends in front of his TV set has also risen steadily through the years. Data from A.C. Nielsen indicate that average daily household hours of television increased from 4 hours and 35 minutes in 1950 to 6 hours and 7 minutes in 1975. Similarly, a 1978 R. H. Bruskin survey estimates that the typical American adult spends 2 hours and 48 minutes a day watching television—a 19 percent increase over the number of minutes spent watching TV in 1970.

Many assume that as TV viewing increases, reading of all types, including books, decreases. Prof. John Robinson, in *How Americans Use Time* (1977), concluded that such was the case. Basing his conclusions on the 1965-66 *Study of Americans' Use of Time*, he reported a definite reciprocal effect: as TV viewing time increased, the time spent in other leisure activities, such as reading or visiting, decreased. According to the *Survey on the Use of Americans' Time*, on a typical day (1965-66), television reached 80 percent of the American population as compared to 70 percent for radio, 25 percent for magazines, 17 percent for newspapers, and less than 2 percent for movies. The average American employed man spent 99 minutes per day watching television, the average employed woman, 62 minutes, and the average housewife, 96 minutes.

In early 1978, some signs appeared that TV watching had declined. Nielsen data indicated that daytime viewing levels had fallen off 7 percent, and prime-time levels, 2.5 percent. Arbitron ratings also indicated a slight downward trend. Many explanations were offered: audiences were now better educated, the Women's Liberation movement was affecting the amount of daytime viewing, programming schedules were unstable, and the mortality rate among new shows was unusually high. It was also suggested that the data indicating the slump may have been incorrect, and the trend only an aberration.

Socioeconomic Trends

Since 1945 we have seen dramatic changes in demography. Population shifts, changes in the size and composition of the labor force, the economic situation in regard to family income and inflation, and mobility all affect book reading.

Population Shifts

In 1945 our nation's population totaled approximately 140 million, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Today our population of approximately 215 million is 50 percent higher than it was in 1945. However, while our total population has expanded, the rate of growth has slowed as a result chiefly of the declining birthrate. In 1950 the birthrate per 1,000 population was 24.1. By 1976 this rate had declined to 14.7. Currently our birthrate is approximately at the Zero Population Growth level.

Projections of future growth by the U.S. Bureau of the Census indicate a maximum population by 1990 of 255 million, and by the year 2000, little more than 280 million. Growth in the reading population then will not come so much from the increase in the population as from improvement in reading competence and in the attitude toward reading.

Changes in the Labor Force

There have also been changes in the labor force that affect book reading. More Americans, for example, are at work now than at any time since World War II. According to a recent report of *U.S. News & World Report*, 94.1 million Americans now hold jobs—almost 60 percent of the work-age Americans sixteen years and older. According to the report, employment has grown faster in the past three years than in any similar period since the end of World War II. From March 1975 to May 1978, there was an almost 12 percent rise in employment. This compares to a 9.3 percent rise from

November 1970 to January 1974, and a 7.7 percent rise from May 1954 to July 1957—the two previous "high increase" periods.

Coincidently and ironically, the rise of employment has been accompanied by a rise in unemployment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1960, there were approximately 3.9 million unemployed Americans, representing almost 6 percent of the entire labor force. In 1977, the number of unemployed has risen to 7.5 million—representing 7.9 percent of the overall labor force. This change in the labor picture reflects the increased number of working women. According to the Census Bureau, in the quarter century from 1950 to 1975, the number of women in the civilian work force doubled—from 18.4 million to 38.5 million.

This trend is expected to continue. According to projections by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 1980 there will be almost 42 million women in the civilian labor force, and by 1990, almost 50 million. Thus, women, who shortly after World War II accounted for only about one-third of the labor force, will soon account for approximately half.

Economic Factors

Earnings and wages have been rising through the years. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1965 the annual earnings of full-time wage and salary workers averaged $5,812. By 1975 this average had almost doubled to $10,890. Even when inflation is taken into account, the increase is substantial. Based on an index of 100 (1967), median wages rose from an index of 130 in 1970 to an index of 197 in 1976.

There are an increasing number of dual-income families in the United States today. In 1967 there were only one-half million U.S. families in which both the husband and wife worked and total earnings were $25,000 or more. By 1976 according to a special *U.S. News* report, the growing number of working wives

had boosted this total to 6 million U.S. families—an increase of more than twelve times. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, disposable personal income in constant (1972) dollars rose from approximately $2,400 in 1950 to more than $4,100 in 1976. Also rising has been the percentage of income that the average American spends on recreation—from 5.8 percent in 1950 to 6.8 percent in 1975.

Judging from the consumer price index, our inflationary spiral is continuing. By the end of 1977, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the national index averaged 181.5 as compared to 100 (1967). By May 1978, this had risen to 193.3.

The Move away from the Central Cities

Another socioeconomic trend with a possible effect on book reading is the population shift away from our nation's central cities to the suburbs and exurbs. The exact parameters of this shift will not be known until the 1980 census is completed, but from 1960 to 1970, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the "urban fringe" of the urban areas gained almost five percentage points in population, while population in the central city declined.

Use of Time

The pattern of life today is not the same as it once was. The work week, for example, has shortened. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average weekly hours worked by those Americans in the manufacturing, mining, and construction industries dropped from 38.6 hours to 35.8 hours from 1966 to 1977. Similarly, our vacations have gotten longer. According to the Bureau, paid vacations for full-time workers increased from 1.8 to 2.2 weeks in the decade from 1960 to 1969.

The 1974 Newspaper Advertising Bureau study found that what Americans do with their leisure time

is not primarily a function of the number of free hours they have or of their demographic profile. Rather, it is chiefly psychological and sociological, and depends to a large extent on their inclinations toward activity and passivity. In *How Americans Use Time,* John Robinson says that the shortened work week has not substantially affected the time patterns of Americans; and neither, in his opinion, do such demographic factors as age, religion, and marital status, or seasons, weather, urbanism, region, type of dwelling, and availability of an automobile or household help. What does play a role are such factors as employment status, social class, and —in the case of women—the number and age of the children in the household. According to Professor Robinson, extensive television viewing by far represents the most important change in how Americans spend their time, and the fact that it consumes so much time has caused a decline in the time spent in visiting and in using other media. Americans are also, he concludes, spending more time in shopping, child-care, and travel.

Changes in Our Attitudes and Habits

A 1977 report by the editors of *Better Homes & Gardens* called "What Happened to the American Family" pinpointed many changes in attitudes and habits. Based on a questionnaire survey of 10,000 respondents, this survey indicated that three of every four Americans (76 percent) believe that family life in the United States is in trouble. According to this survey, the greatest threats to American family life are: inattentive parents, the absence of a religious or spiritual foundation, and the mobility of the population.

Better Homes & Gardens' survey also indicated that Americans are increasingly involved in trying to change their dietary habits. More than half of the respondents reported attempts to eliminate junk foods from their diets. Even more indicated they had in-

creased their eating of vegetables, fruits, and fiber and reduced their eating of fats and sugar.

Some of the more striking conclusions of the survey resulted from a comparison between this 1977 survey and a similar survey conducted in 1972. This comparison indicated that: 1) materialism is considered less of a threat to family life than it once was, 2) the general attitude toward premarital sex has become more liberal, 3) fewer Americans feel that two children in the family is the ideal, 4) there is far more approval for women becoming the main breadwinner in the family, 5) there is less feeling that the effects of working by married women with children are harmful, and 6) there is also less feeling that religion is losing influence in family life.

The Book Industry

What has happened since 1945 in the magazines and newspaper fields has, as noted, a relationship to book reading. Even more directly related to book reading, however, is what has happened to the book industry since the end of World War II. Book publishing has grown tremendously since 1945. According to *Publishers Weekly,* the new titles published in 1945 totaled somewhat over 5,400 and the new editions about 1,200. In 1977, the new titles published reached a total of 27,400 (five times the 1945 total) and the new editions 8,100 (almost seven times the 1945 total).

In total output per capita, significant increases were also recorded. According to *Publishers Weekly,* the ratio of new titles and new editions per capita increased from 0.046 in 1945 to 0.152 in 1977. But the actual number of books sold has not changed much in recent years. According to *Book Industry Trends,* published by the Book Industry Study Group in 1977, annual unit sales in the five-year period from 1972 to 1976 declined one percent—from 1,259,600 in 1972 to 1,243,700 in 1975.

This relative lack of growth in unit sales of books contrasts to an expansion in the number of bookstores in the past three decades. According to the U.S. Census of Retail Trade, in 1948 there were approximately 2,900 retail bookstores. By 1976, according to *Printing and Publishing*, the number of retail bookstores quadrupled —to 12,000 bookstores.

The character of retail book distribution has also changed. Supermarkets and drug stores are now distributing books, particularly paperbacks, to an increasing degree. The number of retail establishments specializing in paperback sales rose 2,500 percent from 1958 to 1978. The number of college bookstores increased more than 100 percent. Increasingly important roles are also now being played by non-retail types of distribution, such as mail order and book clubs. According to the *American Book Trade Directory*, the number of book clubs in the United States increased from 56 to almost 200 in the years from 1958 to 1975.

The distribution outlet mix for book sales has also changed. According to *Book Industry Trends* (1977), during the five-year period from 1972 to 1976, the number of unit sales by general retailers increased 20 percent, and sales direct to consumers increased 8 percent. However, unit sales to libraries and institutions decreased 15 percent, and to schools 17 percent. Similarly, unit sales to college bookstores decreased 9 percent.

How Many Americans Read Books?

Much of the research done since 1945 on the book-reading public addressed itself to the question of how many Americans read books. However, these findings are often incompatible because of different parameters used in defining what a book reader is.

One of the earliest studies taking up this question was conducted by Bernard Berelson and reported in *The Library's Public* (1949). According to Berelson, 25–30

percent of the American population were book readers, by which he meant they read at least one book a month. This same number of Americans, Berelson concluded, also used a library regularly. A Gallup poll, conducted a decade later in 1958, indicated a somewhat smaller number of American book readers. According to Gallup, one in five Americans—21 percent—were "regular readers of books."

Subsequent Gallup polls of book readers were made in 1964, 1965, 1969, and 1971. They indicated that the number of Americans who had read a book "the previous month" increased steadily during this period. In 1964, the same 21 percent was reported as in 1958. But, by 1971, the percentage of book readers in the population had, according to Gallup, increased to 26 percent.

Philip H. Ennis in *Adult Book Reading in the United States*, published by the University of Chicago in 1965, focused on "current readers." Basing his results on a 1,500-respondent survey he conducted for National Opinion Research Center (NORC), Ennis estimated the number of current readers in the population was 49 percent. Another survey, *A Study of Americans' Use of Time* (1965-66) investigated how many Americans read some part of a book daily. It concluded that on any given day, 17 percent of the American population could be considered book readers.

More recently, in 1975, a study conducted by the Gallup Organization for the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies on "The Role of Libraries in America," found that among Americans, 85 percent had read in part or completely at least one book in the previous twelve months, and 56 percent in the previous month.

The Number of Books Read

Previous surveys also report the number of books read, and here too results vary, largely because of different research parameters and definitions. The Berelson

survey (1948) reported that within the previous six-month period, about one-third (36 percent) of all readers read one to four books, another third (32 percent) read five to fourteen books, and about one-fourth (18 percent) read fifteen to forty-nine books. In addition, there was a heavy-reading segment—about one in seven (14 percent) readers—who read fifty or more books in the six-month period.

A 1962 survey by Johnstone Adult Education/NORC reported findings similar to Berelson's. Slightly higher percentages turned up for the number of book readers who read one to four and five to fourteen books during a six-month period, and slightly lower percentages for those who read fifteen to forty-nine and fifty books or more.

Ennis in his 1965 NORC survey used different break-outs. When summarized the results indicated that somewhat over half (55 percent) of all book readers read less than six books in a six-month period, and somewhat less than half (45 percent) six books or more.

The more recent (1975) Gallup Organization survey on the role of libraries in America reported results very similar to Ennis's. It indicated that in a six-month period, three of every five book readers (60 percent) read fewer than six books, and two of every five (40 percent) six books or more.

Time Spent in Reading

Fewer research studies have reported on the amount of time that Americans spend on reading. "What Adults Read," a 1973 study by Amiel Sharon of Educational Testing Service based on a national sample of five thousand adults, concluded that on a typical day "the average person reads for almost two hours." However, included in this study's definition of "reading" were all types of reading—not only books, magazines, and newspapers but also signs, packages, and labels.

The *Study of Americans' Use of Time* (1965-66) reported on the minutes spent per day by the average American in his various work and leisure activities, including reading. According to this survey, housewives spend seven minutes per day reading books, as compared to six minutes reading magazines and twenty-one minutes reading newspapers. This compares to ninety-six minutes per day looking at television. Employed men, according to the study, spend five minutes per day reading books, six minutes reading magazines, twenty-five minutes reading newspapers and ninety-nine minutes per day looking at television. Similarly, employed women spend four minutes per day reading books, four minutes reading magazines, thirty minutes reading newspapers, and sixty-two minutes looking at television.

A 1971 study, undertaken by Gilbert Youth Research for the AAP College Division in conjunction with the National Association of College Book Stores, investigated the time spent in reading by college students and faculty members. Based on 1,000 personal interviews with students and 300 personal interviews with college faculty, this survey found that college students spend only about six hours per week reading non-course-related material (which includes other printed materials besides books). Faculty members were found to spend eleven hours a week reading nonprofessional material.

Sources of Books Read

The 1965 Ennis study, based on NORC research, indicated that most book readers (58 percent) obtained their books from "private collections which included their own." A source almost as important was bookstores, which 56 percent of the respondents (there were multiple answers by respondents) reported as a source. Of lesser importance were the public library (31 percent of the respondents reported this source) and book clubs (19 percent).

When the Ennis/NORC study rephrased the question and asked the *major* source, the findings were different. Most respondents (33 percent) reported bookstores as their major source of books. Following were the public library (21 percent of the respondents) and private collections (also 21 percent). Only one in ten (11 percent) book readers reported book clubs as their major source of books. The 1965 Ennis/NORC study also broke out the book readers' sources of books in terms of different types of readers. Bookstores were still the prime source for heavy readers, defined as those who read twenty-one or more books in a six-month period, but libraries played a more important role as a source of books for heavy readers. Also, fewer heavy readers relied on book clubs and private collections as sources.

The 1976 study by the Gallup Organization on the role of libraries in America had findings partly similar to Ennis's. Among those who had read at least one book in a previous twelve-month period, one in three (36 percent reported bookstores as the source. However, in a departure from the Ennis findings, slightly more respondents (37 percent) reported they had borrowed the book (or books) from friends. Gallup broke out other sources not broken out in the Ennis/NORS study. About one in seven (15 percent) book readers reported as their source a store other than a bookstore, and one in ten (10 percent) said they obtained their book (or books) as a gift. Similarly, one in twelve (8 percent) reported a newsstand as their source.

Types of Books Read

The 1965 Ennis/NORC study indicated that among "frequent" readers, nonfiction books were preferred (40 percent of respondents), followed by serious fiction (28 percent), and poetry (8 percent). Among "occasional" readers, however, although the percentage was the same for nonfiction books (40 percent of re-

spondents), it was higher for serious fiction (40 percent) and also higher for poetry (24 percent). Among those who seldom or never read, poetry emerged as the most preferred (68 percent of respondents), followed by serious fiction (32 percent) and nonfiction (20 percent).

Why Americans Read Books

For many years, it has been assumed that people read books either for enjoyment or for information, or for both reasons. As Henry A. Bamman, professor of education, Sacramento State College, expressed it: "reading is a continuous source of inspiration and pleasure. . . . [It also] provides knowledge that is helpful in various ways."

Long before any research had been done in the reading field, the pleasure and satisfaction that one received reading books was commented upon. "It lasts when other pleasures fade," Anthony Trollope once said. "The greatest pleasure in life when we are young," William Hazlitt wrote. "People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading," said Logan Pearsall Smith. But the nonpleasurable and "work" side of reading has also been frequently identified. "A noble exercise," commented Henry David Thoreau. "An exercise, a gymnast's struggle," said Walt Whitman. "Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body," wrote Joseph Addison.

The dividing line between reading for pleasure and reading for information (or in connection with work or school) is not a clear one. Obtaining information might seem to one book reader a necessary chore; to another, it might be a source of enjoyment. Many observers now agree that the reasons why one reads books are very complicated, and vary from individual to individual. As Ruth Strang explained in *Explorations In Reading Patterns* (1942), reading habits are extremely complex and unique. Each person has "a central core or radix which more or less determines his reading and reading interests."

In the 1976 Gallup Organization survey on the role of libraries in America, respondents were asked why they had read their most recent book. More than four of every five (82 percent) said for "their own enjoyment." A far smaller number (13 percent) said for "work and school." The remaining respondents said either for "both reasons" (3 percent), or they "didn't know" (2 percent).

Who Reads Books?

Since 1945 most of the research directed to the question Who reads books? has centered on determining the demographics of book readers. The conclusion agreed to almost unanimously is that most book readers have a high socioeconomic level. Amiel Sharon of Educational Testing Service in "What Adults Read" concluded that "people with high socio-economic status tend to read more of all kinds of printed matter than those with low socio-economic status."

Similarly, a 1974 survey on American book readers by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau reported that three of every four Americans include reading as part of their leisure time activities, and that the number of heavy readers goes up with education and income. Similarly, the number of those who spend most of their leisure time watching television goes down as education goes up. "Book purchasers are likely to be better educated and more affluent," this survey reported. A 1975 Gallup poll also supported the conclusion that book readers in America were largely up-scale, i.e., young, college-educated, high-income, and white-collar.

Women vs. Men as Book Readers

For a long time, it has been assumed that more women than men read books, and the surveys conducted since 1945 bear this out. The various Gallup polls conducted from 1965 to 1971 indicated that while the number of book-reading males in the population was around 20 percent, the number of book-reading

females was nearer 30 percent. The most recent Gallup poll in 1975 also reported that "women are more likely to read a book than men."

Education Level and Book Reading

Previous research indicates that education is the most important demographic factor influencing book reading. Bernard Berelson in *The Library's Public* (1949) concluded that one of the two major correlates of reading and library use was the education of the reader (the other being the availability of reading resources).

Jan Hajda in his 1963 unpublished doctoral dissertation, "An American Paradox: People and Books in the Metropolis," went even further. He found that the amount of formal education was "the most important factor in determining adult use of books." As Hajda saw it, there was a watershed in book reading somewhere at the level of high school graduation. Those who did not graduate from high school were not likely to turn often to books, while most of those who did graduate and go beyond, were likely to read one or more books a year.

Philip H. Ennis in his 1965 study *Adult Book Reading in the United States* concluded, as Berelson had, that education was a major coordinate in book reading. The Gallup surveys done from 1964 to 1971 also pointed up the relationship between a person's educational level and his book reading. The 1971 survey, for example, indicated that while half (50 percent) of college-educated Americans had read a book in the previous month, only one in five (22 percent) high school graduates had. Similarly, among those with grade school educations, only one in ten (12 percent) had. Also shown by these Gallup surveys was that through the years from 1965 to 1971, the proportion of college-educated Americans who read books had risen almost 10 percent, while the proportion of high school graduates who read them dropped slightly.

When Reading Started and Book Readers

In his 1965 study, Ennis also suggested that when a person started to read had an effect on his future reading. He found that among the group he described as "current readers," the largest segment consisted of those who had started to read early in life. Far fewer were the late starters who had picked up reading later. According to Ennis and his NORC survey, of the 49 percent of the population who were "current readers," 34 percent started reading early in life and 15 percent did not start reading early.

Age and Book Reading

The 1962 Johnstone Adult Education/NORC survey reported that the younger a person, the more likely he or she is to be a book reader. One reason suggested for the younger segments of the population containing more book readers is that these segments contain people who are better educated. As Jan Hajda explained in his 1964 dissertation: "young people read more because many more of them have graduated from high school or college."

The 1962 Johnstone Adult Education/NORC survey supported this view. More than four of every five (81 percent) of the survey sample who were college-educated and who were under thirty-five years were book readers. However, in this same college-educated category, only 77 percent of those thirty-five to fifty-five years were book readers, and only 60 percent of those over fifty-five were book readers. The same relationships were found among respondents with only high-school educations. Among those under thirty-five years, 70 percent were book readers; among those thirty-five to fifty-five years, 52 percent were book readers; and among those over fifty-five years, only 39 percent were readers. Similarly, among those whose education was confined to the grade-school level, in the under thirty-five year segment, 61 percent were readers. In the thirty-five to fifty-five year segment, 31 percent

were readers, and in the over-fifty-five year segment, only 27 percent were readers.

The 1971 Gallup survey reported similar findings. Among the population in the twenty-one to twenty-nine age category, 37 percent had read a book in the previous month, but in the thirty to forty-nine year age category, only 28 percent had read a book, and in the fifty-and-over age category, only 16 percent.

Education and Frequency of Reading

Ennis in his 1965 study noticed that those Americans of higher education levels read more frequently. Among high school graduates or those with more education, two of every three (65 percent) read "frequently." Among those with less than a high school education, only one in three (30 percent) were frequent readers. Similarly, according to Ennis, almost half (47 percent) of all high school graduates were "regular" readers, and less than one in seven (15 percent) were nonreaders.

Ennis found that more than three of every five (62 percent) college graduates were current readers. And when Ennis surveyed Americans who were not current readers, he found that 70 percent did not graduate from high school, while only 35 percent were high school graduates or better.

Education and the Number of Books Read

Research has also been done to correlate the quantity of books a person reads with the level of his education. According to the 1965 Ennis/NORC study, among Americans with a high school education or better, almost one in six (17 percent) read twenty-one books or more during a year. Among those with less than a high school education, the number is only 10 percent.

The Gallup Organization, in its 1975 study "The Role of Libraries in America," published somewhat similar findings. Among those with high school educa-

tions or better, 29 percent had read twenty-one or more books in the course of a year—a percentage almost exactly the same as Ennis's. However, in regard to Americans with less than a high school education, the Gallup results differed from Ennis: whereas Ennis found that 19 percent of this group read twenty-one books or more a year, the Gallup survey found only 13 percent had read this number of books. According to the Gallup findings, fewer less-educated Americans were in the heavy-reader category.

Heavy Readers

Philip H. Ennis in *The Metropolitan Library* (1972), edited by Ralph W. Conant and Kathleen Molz, stated that the reading public had not increased appreciably over the previous two decades and he asked how this could be since the numbers of high school and college graduates had doubled and the number of books had tripled. His conclusion was that "regular book readers read more books now than they used to, thus a smaller proportion of readers is accounting for the high level of reading."

Gallup in its 1975 survey pinpointed demographically who these heavy readers are. Using the definition that a heavy reader was one who read six or more books a year, the survey found that such a reader was likely to be female, young, either a student or college-educated, and with an occupation either professional or in business. The heavy reader was likely to be found in some regions more than in others: the Pacific or Rocky Mountain area and the west central, New England, and east central states.

Sociological and Psychological Factors in Reading

The question of who reads and who does not read is not linked to demographic factors only. Also affecting readership are various sociological and psychological factors. For years, the popular conception of a book

reader was that of an introverted person, often described as a "bookworm."

Jan Hajda, in various studies completed from 1964 to 1967, pointed out the opposite is really the case, i.e., that a book reader is more likely to be a socially integrated person and that the nonreader tends to be lonely and isolated. Hajda made a distinction between *solitude*, "which rejuvenates, refreshes, and reinforces social ties" and *loneliness*, which is "an unsought, painful, meaningless affliction imposed on the individual against his will." He then pointed out that: "Reading books . . . requires an effort. . . . This in itself makes book reading unattractive to a lonely person whose general interest and activity are considerably lower than that of an engaged person." Hajda went on to suggest on the basis of a survey of more than seventeen hundred women that "having many active personal relationships with people outside one's immediate family . . . actually encourages and sustains regular reading." "Isolation," he added, "could lead to a total abandonment of books."

Heinz Steinberg, editor of the *International Bibliography on the Sociology and Psychology of Reading*, summed up Hajda's conclusions: "what [he] is getting at is that while it is impossible to read without solitude, loneliness leads people to drop the book-reading habit." According to Steinberg, "modern readers do not need to escape from the world, but to live in it better." The 1974 survey on book purchasers, conducted by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, comes to the same conclusion. The most active people are also the ones most likely to purchase books.

Accessibility and Book Reading

Ruth Strang in *Explorations in Reading Patterns* (1942) concluded that "accessibility is the most important of the environmental factors influencing reading." Bernard Berelson in *The Library's Public* (1949) selected "accessibility of reading resources" as one of the

two major correlates of reading and library use, the other being the education of the reader. Similarly, Henry C. Link and Harry Hopf in *People and Books*, a 1946 study of reading and book-buying habits sponsored by the Book Industry Committee, reported that one of the two reasons why people read over half of the books identified by the large population in their study was convenience (20 percent of respondents). Philip H. Ennis in his 1965 study *Adult Book Reading in the United States* also agreed that availability of books was a major factor in reading and library usage.

The importance of having books, magazines, and other reading materials around the house seems to be increasingly recognized by the American public. The 1977 *Better Homes & Gardens* survey, summarizing the opinions and attitudes of ten-thousand Americans, reported that the number of Americans who feel it important for a home to have plenty of books, magazines, and other reading materials was an overwhelming 82 percent—an increase of 3 percent over the number who felt that way in the 1972 *Better Homes & Gardens* survey.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Bibliographies

Mann, Margaret. *The Reading Habits of Adults: A Select Annotated Bibliography.* British National Bibliography Research Fund Rund Report No. 1. London: The British Library, 1977.

Major Sources

Adult Functional Competency: A Summary. The University of Texas at Austin, March 1975.

Anders, Patricia L., and Cardell, Douglas. "Self-Perceptions and Reading Habits of Adolescents, College Students, and Adults," paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, New Orleans, La., December 1-3, 1977.

Armbruster, Frank E., and Bracken, Paul. *Our Children Have No Future.* New York: Quadrangle/N.Y. Times, 1977.

Armbruster, Frank E. "The More We Spend, the Less Our Children Learn." *New York Times Magazine,* (August 28, 1977).

Berelson, Bernard. *The Library's Public: A Report of the Public Library Inquiry of the Social Science Research Council.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1949.

Boyer, Ernest L. "A Commitment to Literacy," remarks of the U.S. Commissioner of Education at the International Literacy Conference. Washington, D.C., September 8, 1978.

Brink, R. E. M. van den, and others. *Book Reading, Borrowing and Buying Habits.* 18th Congress, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, June 9-15, 1968. Switzerland: International Publishers Association.

Copperman, William. *The Literacy Hoax.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1978.

Doebler, Paul D. "The Future of Reading." *Publishers Weekly* (April 10, 1978).

Ennis, Philip H. *Adult Book Reading in the United States: A Preliminary Report* (National Opinion Research Center Report, no. 105). Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1965.

_____. "Who Reads?" in *The Metropolitan Library,* ed. Ralph W. Conant and Kathleen Molz. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1972.

Gallup Organization. Reports of book readers and book reading usage published in various surveys, 1964, 1965, 1969, and 1971.

———. *The Role of Libraries in America*, a report of a survey conducted for the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. Frankfort, Ky.: Kentucky Department of Library and Archives, 1976.

Hajda, Jan. "An American Paradox: People and Books in the Metropolis." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Chicago, 1964.

Heidbreder, M. Ann. "Research Needed in the Fields of Reading and Communications." *Library Trends* (October 1973).

Iverson, William, J., and others. *Development of Lifetime Reading Habits*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1968.

Ladd, Boyd. *National Inventory of Library Needs* (1975), a study submitted to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (March 1977). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977.

Link, Henry C., and Hopf, Harry. *People and Books: A Study of Reading and Book-Buying Habits*. New York: Book Industry Committee, Book Manufacturers Institute, 1946.

Lyman, Helen Huguenar. "Reading and the Adult New Reader." *Library Journal* (October 1973).

Mathews, Virginia H. "Adult Reading Studies: Their Implications For Private, Professional and Public Policy." *Library Trends* (October 1973).

Meade, Edward J. "Reading, the First R: A Point of View," speech delivered to the College Reading Association, September 1972.

Moshey, Kathleen M. Slayton. "The Retired Adult Reader," thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Education of Rutgers University, May 1972.

Newspaper Advertising Bureau. *Books and Leisure Time*, a marketing research study. New York: NAB, June 1974.

Norvell, George W. *The Reading Interests of Young People*. Michigan State University Press, 1973.

Robinson, John P. *How Americans Use Time*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977.

Sharon, Amiel T. "Reading Activities of American Adults," paper presented at meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Ill., April 1977.

Steinberg, Heinz. "Books and Readers as a Subject Of Research in Europe and America." *International Social Science Journal*, 1972.

Strang, Ruth. *Explorations in Reading Patterns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.

"Study of Americans' Use of Time," a 1965-66 survey which

compared separate data from a national sample and from the single city of Jackson, Mich., which John P. Robinson compiled and reported in *How Americans Use Time*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977.

"TV's Courtship of Turned-Off Reading," *U.S. News and World Report* (January 30, 1978).

Trismen, Donald A. "Adult Readers: Activities and Goals," paper presented at meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Ill., April 1977.

Yankelovich, Skelly and White. *Young People and Newspapers*, Parts I & II, an exploratory study sponsored by Harte-Hanks Newspapers, Inc. San Antonio, Texas: May 1976.

Other Sources

Association Of American Publishers. *Industry Statistics*, 1977. New York: AAP.

"BISG Seminar Forecasts Growth in Unit Sales." *Publishers Weekly* (January 8, 1978).

Books In Print. New York: R. R. Bowker (Annual).

English, Diane. *"What's Turning Us Off."* Vogue (March 1978).

Lieberman Research. "How and Why People Buy Magazines," a national study of the consumer market for magazines conducted for Publishers Clearing House, 1977.

"In the Race Between Income and Inflation." *U.S. News and World Report* (August 21, 1978).

"Is Anyone Out There Learning?" Broadcast over the C.B.S. Television Network, August 22, 23, and 24, 1978.

Radio Advertising Bureau. *Fact Books* (Annuals, 1974-1977).

Sterling, Christopher H., and Haight, Timothy R. *The Mass Media: Aspen Institute Guide to Communication Industry Trends*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978.

Target Group Index. Various demographic data on readers and purchasers of various media, such as books, magazines, and newspapers. New York: Axiom Market Research Bureau, 1978.

"The Boom in Leisure." *U.S. News and World Report* (May 23, 1977).

"The First R." *Publishers Weekly* (April 17, 1978).

The Question Of Sizes in the Book Industry Today." *Publishers Weekly* (July 31, 1978).

"The Surprising Boom in New Jobs." *U.S. News and World Report* (June 26, 1978).

"The Upward Mobility Two Incomes Can Buy." *Business Week* (February 20, 1978).

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Department of Labor). *Consumer*

Price Index For All Urban Consumers (Revised CPI-U). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1978.

———. *Current Labor Statistics.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 1978.

———. "Current Labor Statistics: Household Data," *Monthly Labor Review* (July 1978).

———. "Employment and Unemployment Trends During 1977." *Monthly Labor Review* (February 1978).

U.S. Bureau of the Census (Department of Commerce). *Annual Survey of Manufactures.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, (1947, 1954, 1958, 1963, 1967, and 1972).

———. *Census Of Retail Trade,* 1972. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office (various dates).

———. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times To 1970:* Bicentennial Edition. 2 vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.

———. *The Statistical Abstracts of the United States.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978.

"Updated Book Trade Statistics—1977," *Publishers Weekly* (August 21, 1978).

"What Has Happened to the American Family," a survey by *Better Homes & Gardens,* 1977.

W. R. Simmons and Associates Research. *Simmons Media Studies.* New York: W. R. Simmons and Associates, 1978.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS

Methodology

The research approach for this study involved several steps. These included:

Planning. After approval of the project, the Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc., study team met with members of the Book Industry Study Group to review and reach agreement on the scope and objectives of the research. Additional planning and review meetings were held at regular intervals throughout the study to ensure that lines of inquiry, analyses, etc. were designed to meet the needs of the Book Industry Group and study sponsors.

Exploratory and Discovery Phase. The initial phase of the research was useful in developing preliminary hypotheses about issues of concern in the study and in gaining insight into "consumer dialogue" with respect to reading and book purchasing. Six focused groups (consisting of eight to ten participants each) were conducted among book readers who were also book purchasers, book readers who were not purchasers, and non-book readers (including nonreaders as well as those who read magazines and/or newspapers only). Focused groups, using a formal discussion guide, were conducted in New York (city and suburbs), Chicago (city and suburbs), Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Quantitative Sample Survey. A large-scale national survey was undertaken following a draft, pretest, and finalization of the questionnaire for this phase of the research. Overall, the survey included 1,450 one-hour interviews conducted among a representative sample of the general United States public age sixteen and over in 165 U.S. cities during May and June, 1978.

Analysis. Following completion of interviewing in the

Copyright © 1978 Book Industry Study Group, Inc.

field, all completed questionnaires were edited, coded, and computer tabulated. Survey data were tabulated and analyzed according to a series of cross-tabulations representing demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral variables.

Definitions

Nonreader: Has not read books, magazines, or newspapers in the past six months.

Non-book reader: Has read newspapers and/or magazines but has not read a book in the past six months.

Book reader: Has read one or more books in the past six months.

"Moderate/heavy" book reader: Read ten or more books in the past six months.

"Light" book reader: Read one to nine books in the past six months.

"Unaided" versus "Aided" Responses: Unaided responses are those based on an open-ended line of questioning. Aided responses are "prompted" by presentation of a list of structured "answer" categories.

Size of the Reading and Book Purchasing Markets

America can be accurately described as a nation of readers. The vast majority (94 percent) of adults (sixteen and over) in the U.S. population had read either books, magazines, or newspapers in the six months preceding May 1978.

More than half of the population (55 percent) had read at least one book in the past six months, and these people also read magazines and/or newspapers. While 39 percent of the population read only magazines and/or newspapers, there is virtually no one (only 2 percent of the population) who reads books and not magazines or newspapers.

Among the total population, there are about as

many book purchasers (54 percent) as there are book readers. While book readers are responsible for most book purchases (either made for themselves or for others), the book purchaser market is also extended by those non-book readers and even non-readers (about one-fifth of each group) who purchase books for others.

Demographic Characteristics

There are considerable demographic differences between the three groups investigated: book readers, non-book readers, and nonreaders. For all practical purposes, one can describe book purchasers and book readers in nearly identical terms; their characteristics are very similar because the book purchase group is composed largely of book readers.

Sex and socioeconomic indicators are clear points of difference between book readers, non-book readers, and nonreaders. Overall, the book reader market is heavily female and "up-scale" (though by no means an "elite" class). Non-book readers have characteristics that most clearly parallel those of the "typical American." Nonreaders represent, perhaps, the least privileged group—particularly in contrast to book readers.

Sex: Sex is an important factor in distinguishing book readers from those who do not read books. The book reader (and book purchaser) groups, on the whole, are composed of a disproportionate number of women (58 percent), relative to the total population. The non-book reader and nonreader groups (about equally) consist of a slight majority of men.

Education: Education is another important factor in distinguishing these groups. Book readers are the best educated relative to others and are more likely than non-book readers and nonreaders to have had some college. However, the book reader market should, by no means, be confused with a "college educated market." While some college education appears to contribute to the likelihood of an individual being a book

reader, the book reader market actually consists of a majority (57 percent) of those who are high school graduates or less. While non-book readers are only slightly less well educated than the population as a whole, the small population group (6 percent) of non-readers are clearly less well educated than readers. (Over 60 percent of this group are less than high school graduates; one-third of them have completed less than ninth grade.)

Income: Income differences between book readers, non-book readers, and nonreaders are on a par with educational differences. Book readers are more affluent than others (either non-readers or non-book readers). But neither book reading nor book purchasing is confined to the wealthy. Only about 10 percent of the book readers and purchasers have incomes above $30,000. The substantially lower incomes of the nonreaders (relative to others) are consistent with the relatively low educational attainment of this group; two out of five nonreaders have family incomes below $10,000.

Race: Race is another significant factor. The book reader group consists of a disproportionate number of whites as compared with the general population. In contrast, the incidence of blacks (and other nonwhite groups) in the nonreader group is twice that of the population as a whole.

Age: Although age differences among book readers, non-book readers, and nonreaders are somewhat less striking than those based on certain other factors such as education, certain issues relating to age and reading are noteworthy. Book readers, by and large, are young —60 percent under the age of forty, and 75 percent under the age of fifty. While those under twenty-one are more likely than others to be book readers (as would be expected due to the student status of many), there are only small differences in the incidence of book reading and purchasing among those in their twenties, thirties, and forties, aside from a slight "peak" in book

reading among the thirty to thirty-nine year olds. More important, however, is a drop-off in the incidence of book reading after the age of fifty, and a (more substantial) drop-off in all types of reading after the age of sixty-five.

Employment: The number of book readers who are employed either full or part time (56 percent) is about on a par with the total population. However, it should be noted that both students and housewives are more heavily represented in the book reader and purchaser groups than among non-book reader or nonreader groups. In contrast, retired and unemployed adults are represented very heavily in the nonreader group (35 percent) and the non-book reader group (27 percent). In addition, it can be surmised that employment, per se, is not a deterrent to book reading. For example, women who are employed full time (without children) are more likely to be book readers than are women who do not work (also without children). And, within the "employed" category in general, white collar employees are more likely to be book readers and purchasers than are blue collar employees.

Marital Status/Family Type: The reader groups also differ according to marital status and family type. While the majority of book readers are married—as is the population as a whole—"never married" individuals do more than their share of book reading and purchasing. At the same time, however, the presence of minor children in a household appears to be a "plus" in favor of book reading. Book readers are more likely than others to have children and even to have a greater number of children than non-book readers and nonreaders.

Organizations: More than half of the adult population, in total, is affiliated with organizations. Membership and/or participation in organizations is greatest among book readers who are more likely than others to be affiliated with service and professional organizations, in particular. Although few non-book readers and nonreaders are affiliated with organizations in general, re-

ligious congregations are their primary affiliations.

Geography: In terms of geography, individuals from any major region of the United States, and any type of region (urban, suburban, or rural) are nearly equally likely to be book readers. Interestingly, however, those in the West are (relative to those in other regions) both most likely to be book readers and most likely to be non-readers. Otherwise, the geographic distribution of book readers matches the distribution of the U.S. population as a whole; three-fourths reside in urban or suburban areas; only one-fourth reside in the Northeast.

Leisure Time Activities and Television

Many would agree than an understanding of book reading requires attention to several other areas of the person's life—particularly his other leisure time activities.

It could be logically argued that other leisure time activities—especially television—would interfere or compete with the time available for book reading or any type of reading. The findings of this study, however, clearly show quite the opposite. Book readers are considerably the most active people in terms of their participation in a great number of leisure time activities. In turn, non-book readers are more active than non-readers in nearly all activities.

A straightforward time/competition interference thesis can also be rejected in the area of television viewing. On the average, book readers spend about as much time watching television as do non-book readers. (Even among book readers, TV viewing time slightly exceeds overall reading time.) The nonreaders do spend more time watching television than either of the "reading" groups. But, because the non-readers differ so greatly from the reading groups with respect to demographic characteristics, other factors beyond "time"—such as motivation and reading skills—must be taken into account to explain the heavier TV viewing of nonreaders.

Radio listening (which is equal to TV viewing in

terms of time expenditures) does not appear to have any profound relationship to reading behavior. Book readers and nonreaders spend slightly more time listening to the radio than do non-book readers.

Patterns of actual preferences for various leisure time activities (among those who participate in each) do not differ dramatically between book readers and others. For example, many leisure time activities such as sports, music, social and domestic activities are preferred about equally by book readers and non-book readers. There are a few activities which are more strongly preferred by nonreaders (as opposed to either of the "reader" groups). These include outdoor activities, going to movies, and physical fitness activities.

Reading History and Demographic Characteristics

The consistently heavy reader is of obvious interest to the publishing and book industries. There are a number of factors important in distinguishing consistently heavy readers from those with other reading history patterns. Those demographic factors that relate to book reading in general are also associated with consistently heavy reading. Consistently heavy readers are more likely (relative to those with other reading histories) to be women, housewives, white, and in the highest income brackets.

Those who are "on/off" readers differ somewhat from consistently heavy readers. For example, they are more likely to be men (although, like the population, this group is still skewed female). While predominantly white, there is a greater concentration of blacks among "on/off" readers than among consistently heavy readers. And, there are not as many "on/off" readers in the highest income groups.

Another smaller group who were formerly light readers but who have increased their reading, are very similar to "on/off" readers. There are, however, two exceptions. They are more likely to be white than

"on/off" readers, and they are less likely than others to be in the forty to fifty-nine age group. This suggests that it is uncommon for adults to become heavier readers in middle age.

Another group of readers now read less than they used to read (formerly heavy, currently light readers). These individuals have several characteristics in common with non-readers. For example, they are more likely than those in others groups to be older (fifty or over, and especially sixty-five and over) and consequently, unemployed/retired. This group of readers also are more likely to have lower incomes than others.

Changes in Reading

When readers were questioned in detail about changes over the past five years in their levels of reading specific materials, considerable differences emerge between readers of books and readers of magazines and newspapers only (non-book readers).

Book readers are likely to report an increase (or no change) in the time they spend reading all types of materials. This applies to books (fiction and nonfiction), magazines, and newspapers about equally. Overall, the net change (reported increase minus reported decrease) in reading of all of these materials is in a *positive* direction among book readers.

Non-book readers, in contrast, report little *net* change over the past five years in their levels of newspaper and magazine reading. Aside from the substantial proportion of those who have *not* changed their reading, there are nearly equal proportions of non-book readers who have either increased *or* decreased their reading involvement.

Overall Patterns of Leisure and Work-School Reading

Reading might be plausibly regarded as either a voluntary activity engaged in for work or school. Analysis of the study findings clearly indicate that read-

ing as a leisure activity predominates over work/school reading. Virtually all readers engage in some type of leisure reading. One half of book readers and one fourth of non-book readers also engage in work or school-related reading. But importantly, work or school-related reading nearly always occurs in combination with leisure reading. Almost no one reads for work or school only.

Book readers demonstrate more heavy reading involvement than non-book readers in nearly all areas. This manifests itself in both the leisure reading and work/school reading areas, and cuts across all types of reading materials. For example, in the leisure reading area, book readers are heavier readers than non-book readers in terms of incidence, quantity, and time involvement. Aside from books, book readers are more likely to read magazines than are non-book readers. Among those who read these materials, a slightly greater number of magazines and newspapers (on the average, per week) are read by book readers than by non-book readers. Further, book readers spend slightly greater amounts of time than non-book readers on leisure reading of these published materials. A similar pattern holds in the work and school reading areas. The incidence of book readers involved in work or school-related reading surpasses that among non-book readers. Similarly, the quantity (issues read) and time expenditures for work or school-related publications (other than books) among book readers are greater than or equal to reading quantity and time expenditures among non-book readers.

Men and women also differ from one another in their typical profiles of involvement in leisure and work or school reading. Women are predominantly leisure readers—65 percent engage in leisure reading only. In the leisure reading area, while the sexes are equally likely to be newspaper readers, women are more likely than men to read books (either fiction or non-fiction) and magazines. Men, in contrast, are more likely than

women to engage in reading for work or school. In particular, men are more frequent trade journal/newsletter readers than are women.

When and Where

Reading as an activity can be adapted to a variety of times and places. But very likely because of the prominence of leisure reading, most reading, in general, takes place at the reader's home, in the evening. Living rooms, dens, and family rooms are key reading locations.

The reading of books, specifically, has a somewhat unique "time and place" dimension. Nearly half of all book readers report reading books (but not magazines or newspapers) in bed, before going to sleep. In contrast, magazines and newspapers are more likely to be read, by both book readers and non-book readers, in the morning or afternoon, in the kitchen or dining room.

There is some evidence of reading at work or school. This is especially true among book readers who are more active readers in the work/school areas. However, very few read any type of material en route to work or school. For example, fewer than one in twenty-five read books on their way to and from work or school and on public transportation.

Time Required for Reading

There is a marked difference between book readers and non-book readers with respect to the perceived ease of reading books vs. magazines and newspapers. Forty-seven percent of the book readers feel it is just as easy to read portions of a book under time constraints as it is to read magazines or newspapers. Non-book readers, on the other hand, do not share this view. Forty percent of non-book readers consider magazines and newspapers preferable for reading under time limits; these readers find reading a book difficult in this situation. Another one fifth of non-book readers find it difficult to read anything unless they have fairly long

periods of time to do so. This is a problem not shared by book readers. The importance of book reading time requirements is discussed later in the report in connection with book reading volume in the section titled "Description of Book Readers."

Reasons for Reading

Among the many reasons for reading, there are two motivations that appear to be of primary importance.

Reading for *general knowledge* (e.g. to become a "better informed person")
Reading for pleasure and recreation.

When given the opportunity to name "all" the reasons they read, general knowledge (with a slight edge) and pleasure are each mentioned by a majority of readers overall. Further, in a forced-choice situation, these two factors, combined, describe the motivations of a majority of readers.

Other motivations appear to be secondary. These are often mentioned in addition to "pleasure" or "general knowledge," but rarely emerge as the most important reasons for reading. They include relaxation, gaining specific career-related information or fulfilling educational requirements, filling time, and satisfying spiritual or religious interests.

Within the overall category of "readers," there are important differences between book readers and non-book readers with respect to key motivations for reading. While many book readers read for general knowledge, pleasure is their primary reading motivation. Non-book readers do not share in the pleasure motivation. Their primary motive for reading is to acquire general knowledge.

Other findings also underscore the importance of pleasure as the reason for a higher incidence of book reading and more sustained reading in general. Women (who are more prone to be book readers than men) pri-

marily mention "pleasure" as the main reason for reading, while men are relatively more interested in general or specific knowledge. Consistently heavy readers are most often motivated by pleasure. In contrast, general knowledge is or was the primary reading motivation of those who have decreased their amount of reading.

Attitudes Toward Books and Toward Other Materials

As discussed earlier, the book reader and non-book reader differ from one another in their reasons for reading. Each of these two groups also has its own view as to which types of reading materials are "best for" satisfying specific reading needs. Specifically, attitudes toward books are significant among book readers and non-book readers.

In general, non-book readers fail to perceive the benefits of books. They do not view books as fulfilling major reading needs or functions. The only exception to this is a perception of nonfiction books as "best for" spiritual or religious reading. Otherwise, non-book readers view magazines as best for pleasure, relaxation, and specific knowledge, and newspapers as best for general knowledge.

Book readers regard books highly for all reading needs. Further, they have quite specific attitudes toward the needs or functions fulfilled by fiction and nonfiction books. Book readers perceive fiction books as clearly "best for" pleasure and relaxation. Nonfiction books, on the other hand, are viewed as "best for" specific career-related information and spiritual or religious reading, and second-best (after newspapers) for general knowledge.

The Book Reader

Book readers differ considerably in the number of books they read. This section focuses on a description of book readers according to number of books read in the past six months. The book reading public (55 per-

cent of the U.S. population) can be classified according to the following groups:

Total Number of Books Read in Past Six Months*	Total U.S. Population	Total Book Readers
More Than 25 Books	10%	18%
10-25 Books	15%	27%
4-9 Books	17%	31%
1-3 Books	13%	24%

* Based on unaided line of inquiry re: fiction and nonfiction books read for leisure and any types of books read for work or school.

There are several ways in which heavy-volume book readers differ from light-volume book readers, although book readers as a group have much in common. Differences between heavy-volume book readers and light-volume book readers are not as striking as differences between book readers and non-book readers. In this connection, attitudes are relatively more important than demographic factors in distinguishing heavy from light-volume book readers.

Each of the factors associated with book reading volume are discussed below.

Sex: The book reader group, on the whole, has a slight majority of women. Women are concentrated in the heavier-volume groups. Nearly 70 percent of the heaviest-volume group are women, as compared with only slightly more than 5 percent in the lighter volume groups.

Age: The majority of book readers as a group are between the ages of twenty-one to forty-nine. While age differences are minimal, the heaviest book readers are more likely than others to be in the thirty to thirty-nine age group. The moderately heavy volume group (ten to twenty-five books read) consists of the greatest number of those (48 percent) under the age of thirty. Lighter volume book readers tend to be older than others. One-fifth of the lightest readers (one to three books) are age sixty and over.

Race: Book readers as a group are predominantly white. There are minimal racial differences between heavy-volume and light-volume readers.

Occupation: While the majority of book readers are employed full- or part-time, lighter-volume book readers are somewhat more likely to be employed full-time than heavier-volume book readers. One-fourth of both the heaviest and lightest book readers are housewives. The moderately heavy-volume group consists of the comparatively greatest concentration of students.

Reading history: A pattern of consistency increases dramatically with book reading volume. Two-thirds of the heaviest readers (as opposed to only one-fifth of the lightest readers) describe themselves as consistently heavy readers. "On/off" reading is common among the lighter volume book readers (under ten books).

Main Reason for Reading: Nearly half of the heaviest book readers read primarily for pleasure. The general knowledge motive is relatively heavier (though not quite on a par with pleasure) among the lighter-volume readers.

Time Required for Reading: On the whole, book readers think that books are as easy to read under time constraints as magazines and newspapers. Lighter-volume book readers (relative to heavier readers) are more likely to view magazines and newspapers as being easier to read than books when faced with time constraints. More than one-fourth of the heaviest readers have "plenty of time" to read and can choose reading materials without regard to time.

The Non-Book Reader

As we have seen, the non-book reader differs from the book reader in many demographic and attitudinal characteristics. Looking more closely at the reading history of non-book readers, it becomes apparent that aside from school years this group has had limited experience with books. Non-book readers are generally not people who only recently discontinued book reading. Fewer than half claim to have voluntarily read books in the past. Of these, the majority stopped reading books more than five years ago.

It is important to understand that non-book readers are not favorably disposed toward books. Frequently cited reasons are that these persons "don't like books" or are simply "not interested in books." Many non-book readers also mention a "lack of time" for book reading. However, there is little evidence to support the idea that other activities interfere with time for book reading. For example, non-book readers engage in fewer leisure time activities than book readers. And non-book readers spend less time reading other types of materials (e.g., magazines) than do book readers. People in this group are no more likely to be employed, and actually are less likely to have children than book readers.

The Nonreader

By and large, nonreaders (the 6 percent of the population who currently do not read anything) have never engaged in voluntary reading. Sixty percent of the nonreaders have never read books, magazines, or newspapers on their own.

Nonreaders have had even less experience with books than non-book readers. Those who have read in the past (40 percent), read primarily newspapers and magazines. Two in five read fiction books and one in three read nonfiction books. Most of that reading occurred over five years ago.

The negative disposition of nonreaders toward books also applies to reading in general. As with the non-book reader, a lack of interest in reading (and in books) is the primary deterrent to the nonreader. Time constraints are only a minor deterrent for this group. In fact, nonreaders often have a great deal of time available for reading, since this group is composed of a large number of those who are retired or unemployed. Further, nonreaders engage in fewer nonreading leisure activities (aside from TV viewing) than other groups.

Many nonreaders (more than one in ten) mention reading difficulties, and it should be kept in mind that

the educational level of this group is low. Visual problems (mentioned by more than one in ten) add a further complication for nonreaders—many of whom are over age sixty-five.

Nonpurchase Sources of Books

While most book readers purchase books for their own reading, this is not necessarily the primary way books are acquired. In fact, the most book readers (93 percent) have obtained books in the past six months without purchasing them.

Borrowing or trading books is the most common method of nonpurchase book acquisition: more than half of all book readers (57 percent) have obtained books from friends or relatives. The incidence of borrowing and trading books (though not the number of books obtained) actually exceeds the incidence of retail bookstore usage. Book readers are more likely to receive books passed along by friends than by members of their own households.

There are a few other sources of books used more than some of the major purchase outlets (aside from retail bookstores). Libraries are an important source of books, and half of the book readers obtained books from public or school libraries in the past six months. Gifts are a source of books for one-third of the book readers, and schools or places of employment provide books for one-fifth of the book readers.

One might think that nonpurchase sources would be used primarily by those who do not spend money on books. Importantly, we find that this is clearly not the case. Those who purchase books for themselves are just as likely to obtain books from several of the nonpurchase sources (i.e., libraries, friends) as are nonpurchasers.

The heaviest spenders are also as likely to obtain books through several nonpurchase sources as are the lightest spenders. Those who read a great deal rely on

a wide variety of sources of books, regardless of whether or not the books are purchased.

Use of Libraries

Libraries are a leading nonpurchase source of books for the book reader. Half of all book readers have obtained books from libraries; two out of five have obtained books in the past six months from public libraries specifically.

Those who use libraries rely heavily on them for books. Library users have obtained an average of twelve books from libraries in the past six months. This is roughly double the average number of books obtained from bookstores during the same time. Library users report visiting libraries more than three times per month, on the average, and typically check out one or two books per visit.

Those who visit libraries do so primarily to find reading materials for themselves. But many also obtain books at libraries for children or someone other than themselves. There is a considerable range in the distance library users must or are willing to travel to libraries. One-third of the library users live within a half mile of the library they visit; one-fourth live four or more miles away.

Certain groups of book readers are more likely to visit libraries than others. Heavier-volume book readers make greater use of libraries than lighter-volume book readers. In addition, certain demographic characteristics distinguish those book readers who are most and least likely to obtain books from libraries.

Age: Young people (under age twenty-one) followed by those between the ages of thirty to thirty-nine are most likely to be library visitors. Those over the age of fifty are least likely to use libraries.

Education: Those with at least some college education are substantially more likely to be library users than are those with a high school education or less.

Children: Presence of children in a household affects

library use. Those with elementary school age children are most likely to visit libraries. Those without children in the household are least likely to visit libraries.

Location: Those who reside in rural or suburban areas are more likely to visit libraries than those who reside in urban areas.

Bookstore Visits: Those who frequently or occasionally visit bookstores are also likely to visit libraries. Less than one-fourth of non-bookstore visitors have obtained books from libraries.

Reasons for Book Purchasing and for Obtaining Without Purchase

As has been pointed out, most book readers purchase books and obtain them in other ways. In examining the motivations behind the various methods of acquisition, we do not find that one type of book reader is motivated by specific "purchase incentives" and that another is motivated by "nonpurchase" reasons. However, certain reasons for purchase and nonpurchase of books tend to be shared by readers as a group.

The intrinsic value of book ownership is important only for certain types of books. For example, two-thirds of "book reader/purchasers" report keeping a collection of certain types of books, but only half say they "just like the idea" of owning the books they read. For many, book purchasing can be the easiest way to obtain books. For example, two-thirds of the "book reader/purchasers" think that certain types of books are more readily available if purchased. Half think that purchasing books is simply more convenient than borrowing from a library. In addition, more than half purchase books on the spur of the moment.

Those who obtain books without purchasing them do not do so out of determination to avoid purchasing. Nearly two-thirds say they are also willing to purchase a book of interest, if necessary. The ability to obtain books easily from friends and relatives is an important

convenience to more than half. Price is a concern to fewer than half of the book readers.

"Special interests in reading" are more often cited as reasons both for purchasing and for obtaining books without purchasing them among the moderate-to-heavy-volume book readers and the heaviest spenders. For the heavy-volume book readers, convenience is a reason both for purchasing and obtaining books without purchasing them. For example, heavy-volume book readers are likely to purchase books because they are in places where books are sold. These book readers also report having easy access to libraries where they can borrow books.

For the lightest readers and lightest spenders, there are two unrelated factors that are relatively more important reasons for obtaining books without purchasing them. First, half of the lightest "readers/spenders" mention price as a deterrent to purchasing. Secondly, these book readers report a certain lack of initiative in book reading; they are more likely to read books they are given by others.

Two out of five "book reader/purchasers" have had occasion to purchase books they haven't read. This practice is even more common among heavier book readers. Such unread books are saved until the reader has time or is in the mood to read them.

DISCUSSION OF THE SURVEY

Seminar participants agreed that the survey was an important first step in reassessing American reading skills and habits. Making generalizations in this field is risky, however; existing data, including that provided in the BISG Consumer Research Study, was fragmented, often inconclusive, and nearly always difficult to compare to that acquired in other studies. There was skepticism about the study's conclusion that only 6 percent of the American population could be considered "nonreaders." Most seminar participants thought that this figure was low, primarily because people tend to overstate or exaggerate socially acceptable behavior such as reading. Several persons recommended another survey in five or six years that would ask the same questions and perhaps involve many of the same respondents. Such an effort would establish a control group and provide an opportunity for trend analysis—one of the lacunae in contemporary reading research. A number of individuals advocated a similar survey for persons under sixteen years of age. Several methodological problems were pointed out and discussed, including the vague definitions of "book" and "reading" and the implicit assumption that reading newspapers and magazines was different and somehow "inferior" to the reading of books.

It was agreed that the BISG Consumer Research Study was especially useful in 1) pointing to several specific areas where immediate steps could be taken to encourage the reading habit, especially among the over-sixty-five age group; 2) adding to the growing body of

evidence demonstrating that "television is not the enemy," therefore denying book advocates, in the words of Robert Hale of the American Booksellers Association, "the use of the crutch of television" as the supposed cause of all our woes; and 3) dramatically illustrating the lack of agreement and the need for improved communication among those concerned with investigating reading skills, habits, and trends. A common terminology and methodology are required. Furthermore, it would be most desirable to establish a research clearinghouse responsible for gathering and disseminating information about research—past, present, and contemplated—to researchers and to the general public.

Arthur White, executive vice president, who directed the survey for Yankelovich, Skelly & White, emphasized that its primary goal was to test our assumptions about "the status of reading in America." While the study does not—and cannot—satisfy everyone, it provides many "tentative conclusions." There now is a "greater measure of agreement on what the problem is and what are some of the things we can do about it." The survey is only a beginning, but it has accumulated a great deal of information and "we all should make the best possible use of these data." Mr. White also expressed his surprise at the lack of agreement and communication among professionals in the areas of reading and literacy, fields which are ripe for "good thinking" and individual initiative. These are disciplines where many "bright, capable, and intensely interested" people are at work, but progress would be much faster if there was more communication and circulation of ideas. He cited Reading is Fundamental, Inc., as an example of a successful program incorporating many concepts that others could adapt.

Robert Ellis of Time, Inc., felt that much more research is needed about all aspects of reading, especially in reading dynamics (what brings people to books?) and in examining the complexity of reading behavior

("there's an anthropology, an ethnography, to the way people approach reading that we need to begin to pay attention to.") Readership should be treated as a serious field; comprehensive readership studies seem to have "died out" about twenty years ago when television began to take over. One result is that for the past decade or so "we have not been able to describe the trends in readership in books or magazines or newspapers very accurately." Of course there have been many surveys by individual publishers but most of these have been "self-serving" attempts concerned with advertising or related aspects of marketing. The BISG Consumer Research Study points to several important areas that need further research, for example, the whole question of the "heavy reader." Is the proportion of heavy readers in the total population increasing or decreasing? This is the kind of important question that we still cannot answer.

While encouraged by the survey effort and by some of the results, both Hendrik Edelman of the Cornell University Libraries and Alexander Hoffman of Doubleday & Company had doubts about matters of definition and methodology. Mr. Edelman was unhappy "with the qualification of non-book readers versus book readers," because "neither the quality of reading nor the quality of information depends on the format in which it is presented." Moreover, "to portray book readers as the 'ultimate' is, I think, a misrepresentation."

Mr. Hoffman commented on Doubleday's subscriber surveys in its book club division, an experience that has led the firm to nearly abandon this type of research since, when members are asked about their reading habits, "they constantly overstate by somewhat more than 100 percent." He had checked several items in the BISG Consumer Research Study and found the same exaggeration. For example, "16 percent of the total adult population claim they are members of a book club . . . that comes out to over 14 million people and we know that this is more than double the number of

75

people who actually belong to book clubs." Nonetheless, Mr. Hoffman found a silver lining. It appears that "one of the things that motivates a person to join a book club is a sense of guilt . . . and I think it's a constructive thing to try to come to grips with how to convert this sense of wanting to read into actual reading." Such a concern, in his opinion, leads directly to two other topics of special interest to the seminar: reading motivation and in particular the perception of reading held by students when they leave school.

Mary Jo Lynch of the American Library Association provided seminar participants with a preview of the findings of a study on book reading and library use recently conducted for the American Library Association by the Gallup Organization. According to the poll, more than half of all Americans age eighteen or over have visited a public library within the last year and 71 percent of the library users said they had read a book in the last month. About one out of three adults read one or more books a month and almost 25 percent read twenty-four or more books a year. In addition to this rough correlation with the survey finding about the proportion of book readers in our society, there were other similarities between the two sets of findings, namely that book readers are active, well-rounded people, that television does not necessarily have a negative effect on reading habits and in some cases is a stimulus, that women are the heaviest readers, and that persons over fifty years old read less.*

Martin Levin of the Times Mirror Company, who directed the survey for the Book Industry Study Group, stressed its purpose: it was to establish trends and benchmarks and was never intended as an "audit" of American reading habits. Like many other seminar participants, he found the fragmented approach to current research in the field appalling. As a partial remedy he proposed that the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress hire a research director whose responsibil-

*For a summary of the Gallup survey see appendix 2, p. 95.

ities would be to collect data about research in the reading and literacy fields, to try to bring researchers together "to agree on some common terminology, functions, formats, and disciplines," and then to disseminate these decisions and information about the research itself.

77

THE SCHOOLS AND THE TEACHING OF READING

The survey conclusion that pleasure is a prime motivation for reading led many seminar participants to a debate about the teaching of reading in the schools. The basic question was: Is too much emphasis placed on teaching reading skills or the so-called "technical aspects" of reading instead of on educating students about the joys of reading for its own sake? The discussion was wide-ranging and covered topics such as minimum competency tests, remedial reading programs, and reading comprehension. The needs to strengthen school libraries and to work for a stronger relationship between the reading teacher and the school library media specialist were also noted. In addition, useful information was exchanged about several successful school-related projects, including Reading is Fundamental, Inc., the U.S. Department of Justice's Project READ, and projects in the school systems of Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Massachusetts. Once again the need to gather and disseminate accurate information was highlighted—and made evident by the nature of the discussion.

In Martin Levin's opinion, the one "staggering fact" coming out of the survey was that when the non-reader was asked when it was that he or she stopped reading, the answer was "when I left school." In Mr. Levin's view our school system "has got to turn out a reader who reads as effortlessly as one can ride a bicycle and gets as much pleasure out of it. . . . We need an all-out effort to build into the school system [the kinds of] programs that will create genuine readers—those

who can taste the real pleasures of reading and achieve understanding at the same time." Richard Fontaine of B. Dalton, Booksellers, voiced a similar concern: "All too often in our educational systems, particularly in the elementary schools, the accent in reading has been on the functional aspects." He asked if reading purely for assignments or to write book reports could ever give a student an appreciation of reading that would last a lifetime. Roger Farr of Indiana University, representing the International Reading Association, rebutted these and other comments with a strong defense of the schools. He said that there is a need to do a better job of informing the American public about what is happening in the schools regarding reading and literacy.

Mr. Farr asserted that, contrary to public opinion, "children today read far better than at any other time in the history of this nation." Unfortunately few people recognize this fact. One reason is a lack of faith in our public schools that is being reinforced by the media and sometimes by educators "who find they can get more funding if they talk about what a bad job teachers are doing or how poorly their students are doing, or about declines in test scores." The CBS television program "Is Anyone Out There Learning," for example, "spent thirty seconds answering that question with an 'absolutely not,' and then went on to talk about why they were not learning." What is needed instead, according to Mr. Farr, is a public information effort that will bring the facts to the public in a way that will promote meaningful discussion of many of the specific problems of interest to participants in this seminar, for example, school reading programs, test scores, access to books, and book distribution systems. We should not allow public opinion to be formed on these vital topics "by innuendo and gossip."

Roger Farr continued by turning his attention to the minimum competency effort, whereby over thirty-five states now require students to pass a minimum competency test before a high school diploma is awarded.

This effort has been brought about largely by the drop in scores on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, but in fact that drop "has very little to do with basic literacy" since the students who take those tests are the best students in our schools. Nevertheless, "in reaction to the best students doing poorly or more poorly on the SAT's, we have instituted a program of giving minimum competency tests to the worst readers," a practice that "makes absolutely no sense whatsoever." Furthermore, by and large the minimum competency tests "will bring about a greater emphasis not on recreational reading and reading for pleasure, but on test scores and on the technical aspects of reading because of the pressures "to teach what you are going to test."

Andrew H. Neilly, Jr., president of John Wiley & Sons and BISG chairman, said that he hoped the schools were doing as well as Mr. Farr said they were but added that if they were, why were so many universities now forced to teach remedial reading? Moreover, college textbook publishers are now required to produce reading levels for even advanced textbooks "and it's very hard to write down an engineering or physics textbook to a 12th grade or 8th grade level." Mr. Farr responded by noting that Mr. Neilly had identified two more areas where accurate information needed to be widely disseminated: the effect of open enrollment on reading abilities and the reading level of textbooks. He pointed out that part of the reading level "writedown" effort is the intent to make textbooks more readable, a principle he personally would like to see applied to other documents, for example our income tax forms.

In response to a question from Theodore Waller of Grolier, Inc., Mr. Farr noted that reading methodology textbooks in teacher-training institutions emphasize both reading skills and the need to stimulate a love of reading for its own sake. Tests often emphasize skills, however, and this stress sometimes creates "an overemphasis on teaching for skills." Obviously the goal

must be a proper balance between teaching for skills and teaching to inculcate reading pleasure.

Thomas Sticht of the National Institute of Education agreed with Roger Farr, observing that "it's easy to browbeat an educational system" that is being asked both to expand its service to everybody and to teach everybody "to read critically." He also added two topics to the agenda for future discussion: the importance of designing textbooks so they enhance, not impede, learning and the need to pay attention to the problem of reading comprehension. Concerning the latter: "I think the BISG Consumer Research Study is important, but it doesn't tell me about how well people comprehend what they are reading. My own experience suggests that we have an awfully long way to go in education to develop the kind of thoughtful readers we need—people with those analytic skills that are necessary in a society that is trying to be both 'heavy technology and heavy democracy.' "

In addition to debating the role of the schools, seminar participants discussed many other factors that contribute to an early appreciation of the values of books and reading: peer group, parental, home, and community influences were recognized as especially important ingredients. The BISG Consumer Research Study finding that "consistently heavy readers are most often motivated by pleasure" elicited much comment and several recommendations for further research into the complexities of reading motivation. The survey finding that there is "a drop-off in the incidence of book reading after the age of fifty, and a [more substantial] drop-off in all types of reading after the age of sixty-five" brought about surprise and concern. Proposals also were made for changing basic attitudes toward reading by emphasizing the need to view reading by itself as a valuable and worthwhile activity.

Seminar participants came forth with many ideas for making more books accessible to a greater number of people. Specific proposals involved providing books on airplanes, providing books in hotels, motels, and business firms; making better use of stripped books that are now destroyed, selling books in libraries, and strengthening the book departments of college bookstores. The U.S. mails were a subject of concern, especially the adverse effect of increasing postal rates on the easy availability of books. The advantages of direct mail advertising and distribution also were discussed.

The great and largely untapped potential of television for promoting books and reading was a major

topic, especially after two German visitors, Heinz Steinberg and Rolf Zitzlsperger, described the results of a recent reading survey in Germany. Over three thousand persons were interviewed and the results indicated that television was the single most important *stimulus* to reading in German society—more important than the school, than friends, than the family or the home environment. In response to this finding and details describing an alliance between German national television and Mr. Zitzlsperger's German Reading Association, Dr. Boorstin outlined his hope that the American television networks could be persuaded to promote reading in imaginative and visually exciting ways. One idea now being pursued by the Center for the Book would be a thirty-second spot announcement after selected network programs in which viewers are encouraged to read appropriate books available in their local libraries and bookstores.

Why shouldn't the President of the United States issue a "national decree" about the importance of reading? This question, posed by Esther Margolis of Bantam Books, led to a discussion of the benefits of a national commitment to reading—a commitment that would involve citizens, citizen groups, and professionals. Comparisons were drawn with the President's Council on Physical Fitness, especially its objectives and its success in providing an "umbrella" for a variety of regional and local activities. Communicating the benefits of reading to a new and wider audience was a major theme of the entire seminar with specific strategies being described and proposed by, among others, Arthur White, Thomas Johnson, president of the *Los Angeles Times*, and Charles Weinberg of Stanford University.

Arthur White, in summarizing the survey's findings, found "a number of factors facilitating book reading" that could be used to find and encourage more readers. The first is "a core of moderate-heavy book readers . . . [who are] reading more all the time." Secondly, the interviews indicate that the benefits of book

reading can be communicated to nonreaders; even those who do not read, buy books as gifts for those who do, indicating their own "good image" of reading. Books themselves are flexible "products," subject to many kinds of marketing. The increasing amount of leisure time enjoyed by Americans, the desire to continue strong support for educators in spite of antigovernment sentiment, and the increase in individual self-fulfillment activities should be viewed as opportunities for individuals to become readers or more active readers than ever before.

84

LETTERS

The following comments were sent to
The Center for the Book after the October 26 discussion.

John B. Putnam

With respect to the consumer survey itself: despite the methodological problems and what I took to be general skepticism about some of the conclusions, I think it is a first-rate job, especially since it attempts to chart such a huge and little known subject. Arthur White and his colleagues deserve all our thanks, for they have given us a very worthy point of departure. That said, let me urge that a second survey be planned within the next five to seven years in order to establish some trend data, especially with respect to the reading habits of the over-sixty-five population. We should know whether visual and other physical handicaps are to blame for nonreading in this group, or if instead the present fifty-five to sixty-five age group will carry their present reading habits along with them. If possible, a second survey should sample at least some of the respondents to the earlier study, in order to establish a control group against which the rest of the test sample might be evaluated. . . . I think it most important that a well-designed survey of readers below the age of 16 —including the very young who may be read to rather than reading themselves—be conducted as soon as possible, since it is within this age group that reading becomes either a habit or a problem.

The [survey] data on non-book readers and nonreaders suggest that the principal reason for their failure to read books is that "books aren't their thing." I'd like to know more about *why* this is so: have we

failed to put appropriate books in touch with potential readers? Have we failed to provide for the interests of substantial segments of our population? Or must we simply take our losses and admit that there are people who just plain won't be bothered with books, regardless of the existence of books that deal with their own interests?

If our problem is that of failing to connect our books with their proper readers, we ought to be paying more attention to the use of direct mail in identifying our readerships and in delivering books to them. While I would hate to see the day when we build our publishing programs entirely on the basis of market research, there is good reason to find out if there are communities of interest that are not being served by the book industry and seek to develop for them what they want in the way of books. We need to reach out to the voluntary and other membership organizations outside of the book world, to see what some of our invisible and unserved constituencies may be.

The problem of access—particularly for tiny publics in remote areas—continues to vex such publishers as ourselves, and for this reason I would like to see much more attention given to the use of direct mail not only as a tool for delivering books to readers, but for finding readers and bringing them specialized information on books that will appeal to their individual interests. This is a problem with which we have had a great deal of experience at AAUP—experience that could be exploited to the mutual benefit of the book community and readers everywhere.

Julia R. Palmer

It seems quite clear that there is a very real difference of opinion as to whether or not there is in fact a reading problem. The International Reading Association says more young people are reading better than ever before. Yet there is certainly widespread dissatisfaction among college faculty with the level of educa-

tion among college freshmen and among businessmen with the level of education among high school graduates . . . I should think it would be relatively easy to get funds . . . to do an in-depth study of the actual level of both literacy and coping skills of young people from eight to sixteen. The minimum competency tests will not, I am afraid, be very revealing. The one about to be used in New York State is so easy as to be almost meaningless. Yet I am told, by a number of educators, that it is estimated that 20 percent of New York City high school seniors will fail it. If this is true, it testifies to a worse failure of the schools than anyone had understood because, of course, it leaves out of the picture the great number of young people who have already dropped out of the system and therefore will not take the test.

Much as I worry about the damage minimum competency testing will do to individual children, it seems to me that the legislative ferment has a positive as well as a negative side. Citizens everywhere *do* care about education and literacy. They may be going the wrong way about it but they are not apathetic and there must be some way to take advantage of that.

Janet K. Carsetti

As I mentioned at the meeting, Project READ uses a nonstop reading program in all of its schools. For a minimum of twenty (20) minutes a day, everything stops in the school and everyone reads. This includes teachers, administrative and support staff, and any visitors who might be in the school. During this twenty-minute period, everyone reads from paperback books provided through Project READ. The philosophy behind this approach is very simple. There must be practice time given to reading, just as there is practice time given to all other basic skills. This practice time must also take place during the school day so that students gradually see that reading is so important everyone takes time out from their other work to do nothing but

read. Additionally, no questions are asked concerning what they read or how much they read. It is strictly a time to *practice* reading. This is such a simple approach that it could work in every school in this country. If the Center for the Book were to support something like this, I'm sure that all schools would experience the same results that we have; i.e., an increase in reading level and a change toward a positive attitude in the reading/learning process. . . .

I am extremely concerned over the waste of books and magazines in this country. As [one of the publishers] indicated at the meeting, more than 3½ million books are destroyed by publishers each year. Additionally, millions of paperback books and magazines are stripped and then destroyed each week. We know there is a population in this country of young and old who do not read anything. One possible reason for their lack of reading could be simply that they have nothing to read, and cannot afford to buy anything. If we could somehow get these books and magazines that are destroyed into the hands of those who would not otherwise purchase reading material, we could provide a tremendous service to the public. For the past few weeks, *Publishers Weekly* has provided letters from a number of concerned bookstore owners concerning this waste of reading material. These concerned bookstore owners are donating their stripped books to local schools. Once again, if the Center for the Book could support a program on a national level to get these stripped books to the people, I feel it would be doing a tremendous service.

Lester Asheim

One thing that surfaced at the [recent] meeting of the Urban Libraries Council is a growing emphasis on the library as a center only for the instrumental use of the book: support of formal education, support of organized continuing education, source of factual information and data banks, etc. Recreational reading and

unplanned browsing were either ignored or quite specifically discarded as a role for the library of the future. I am disturbed by this, and said so in my summary paper, but I do think that maybe this is an area that should be given some attention. I don't mean that we should do a lot of cutesy stuff about how much *fun* reading is, but rather that we explore the social and psychological values of reading other than reading-for-a-predetermined-purpose. The effects and influence of reading and any other experience is that we learn from it in a great many ways other than those specifically planned-for in advance; indeed, that we may learn more from the experience in which we are not at all aware of the learning, and much less from the sober note-taking perusal of sources of information. I don't know how to get at this, but surely we ought to be able to do something to revive the recognition that "serious" doesn't necessarily mean sober or deliberately purposive. My guess is that even science would lose if we ruled out imagination and permitted only solemnity and earnestness. . . .

Another thing that might be worth discussing a bit, and perhaps clarifying for our own purposes, is the many connotations that attach to the word, "reading." A school teacher often seems to mean simply the skill of recognizing letters and forming them into words so that some minimal, dictionary meaning is gained from this exercise. The bookseller means sales. Mortimer Adler [at the April 1978 Center for the Book meeting on television, the book, and the classroom] meant something very special, to which almost none of the others would confine themselves. Librarians stress content [like Adler] but without his elitist restrictions on what is acceptable. And the average person who responds to questionnaires and survey interviews is constantly reporting *no* reading in the past six months, when we know darned well he couldn't drive to work, or get through a morning on the job, without performing the reading act many, many times per hour. I am concerned

that we imagine that there is more agreement than there really is when we make multi-group resolutions and statements concerning the values of reading and our support of it, or cite statistics on responses to questions when we don't know how the respondents interpreted the question. A statement by Herman Liebaers way back in 1972 in an IFLA context strikes me as interesting: "The larger the library the smaller the importance of reading. In a large research library, readers tend to be replaced by users." This accounts for the lack of unanimity even among librarians . . . librarians in small libraries are still concerned about readers; both are interested in the use of print but with enough difference between their value systems as to make agreement almost impossible. . . . Meanwhile reading goes on, serving a whole variety of purposes for different times, and much of it excluded completely from any of the categories that have been identified above.

John S. Zinsser, Jr.

It seems to me that there were two main thrusts on how to improve reading habits—via skills and via motivation. I feel the latter is the more important route to follow. If reading can be made a joy and a pleasure early in life, we will be able to create a much larger reading public. The question is: How do we make reading appealing?

I liked what Julia Palmer said about the Pennsylvania Plan, where a number of colorful books are placed in lower grade school rooms. Non-scholastic questions are asked about them and the children, as she reported, read. I think the Center [for the Book] should look into this plan and give it whatever support is possible.

I also believe that for young people, reading suffers from being thought of as the act of a "greasy grind" (or whatever they are called nowadays) and that it isn't a "cool" thing to do. To get at that part of the problem, I think we should try to work with youth groups to make reading much more acceptable on the peer level.

I suggest attempting to interest the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and similar organizations in starting to think of reading as an *activity*, like cooking or playing basketball or camping or sewing or acting—something to be done specially and independently of school pressures and tests. As Janet Carsetti remarked in her discussion of Project READ, the people in that program immediately began to read when reading was considered a special activity, when they were granted freedom of choice and when they saw that reports were not going to be asked for.

I feel that children would respond to these inducements and, of course, one of the best parts of this suggestion is that other organizations would carry them out. Of course I recommend anything that can be done *in school* (like the Pennsylvania Plan) to detoxify books and reading, and I am sure publishers would be glad to help make up lists of books that might attract reluctant readers. If a child is ready for *Othello* or *The Magic Mountain*, that is wonderful; if he isn't, I say let him read *Rebecca* or *A Tale of Two Cities* (or whatever) to sharpen up his interest before tackling more difficult works. And on a more basic level, let him read *anything* to get him started. Janet Carsetti said she got hard-core nonreaders reading by starting with *Candy*, and I say good for her.

By making reading an acceptable activity and by giving young readers the right books for them, we would be making an auspicious start.

Appendix 1

Seminar Participants

Lester Asheim
Professor of Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Daniel J. Boorstin
The Librarian of Congress

Adele Bowers
President, Book Division Times Mirror Magazines

Janet K. Carsetti
Director, Project READ U.S. Department of Justice

Jeanne S. Chall
Professor, Graduate School of Education Harvard University

Hendrik Edelman
Assistant Director, Cornell University Libraries

Robert Ellis
Consultant, Time, Inc.

Roger Farr
School of Education, Indiana University
Representing the International Reading Association

Richard Fontaine
Senior Vice-President, B. Dalton, Bookseller

David R. Godine
President, The Godine Press, Inc.

Robert Hale
Associate Executive Director American Booksellers Association

Dick Hays
Associate Commissioner, Office of Libraries and Learning Resources U.S. Office of Education

Alexander C. Hoffman
Vice-President, Doubleday & Co.

W. Thomas Johnson
President, Los Angeles Times

Richard Kern
U.S. Army Research Institute

Richard P. Kleeman
Vice-President, Association of American Publishers

Gerald Korn
Managing Editor, Time-Life Books

Martin P. Levin
President, Book Publishing Group The Times Mirror Company

Helen H. Lyman
Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison
free-lance consultant

Mary Jo Lynch
Director, Research Office American Library Association

Esther Margolis
Senior Vice-President, Promotion, Advertising, Publicity & Public Relations, Bantam Books, Inc.

Virginia H. Mathews
Director, Gaylord Professional Publications

Margaret McNamara
Chairman of the Board, Reading is Fundamental, Inc.

Andrew H. Neilly, Jr.
President, John Wiley & Sons

Carol A. Nemeyer
Associate Librarian for National Programs
Library of Congress

Virginia O'Leary
Right to Read Program, U.S. Office of Education

Julia R. Palmer
Chairman and Director, American Reading Council

John B. Putnam
Executive Director, The Association of American University Presses, Inc.

Heinz Steinberg
reading specialist representing the German National Book League

Thomas G. Sticht
Senior Associate, National Institute of Education

Barbara Tuchman
author and historian

Theodore Waller
Executive Vice-President, Grolier, Inc.

Charles B. Weinberg
Professor of Marketing, Stanford University

Arthur H. White
Executive Vice-President, Yankelovich, Skelly & White

John S. Zinsser, Jr.
Senior Editor, Reader's Digest

Rolf Zitzlsperger
Secretary General, the German Reading Association

Appendix 2

The American Library Association Gallup Organization Survey

Editors' note: **The press release that follows, issued by the American Library Association in November 1978, describes the principal findings of the ALA/Gallup Organization survey on libraries and reading.**

More than half of all Americans aged eighteen and over have visited a public library in the last year, and 71 percent of library visitors have read a book in the last month.

These are two of the findings in a preliminary review of a new study on libraries and reading, commissioned by the American Library Association, conducted by the Gallup Organization, and sponsored by a special grant from Baker & Taylor, the country's oldest and largest book distributor.

The study was planned to gather new data on how Americans perceive libraries. The survey results will be relevant for thousands of delegates now participating in meetings across the country preparatory to the 1979 White House Conference on Library and Information Services.

In spite of the fact that more Americans are using the public library, about one-fifth of the 1,515 respondents have no idea where the funding for the library comes from, and an additional 39 percent incorrectly stated the principal source of library funding.

If a budget crunch were to occur, almost nobody wants library services reduced, but only 43 percent want taxes increased to cover rising costs. Half of the respondents said they would favor charging library users.

Traditional library services were used by the respondents most frequently: Seventy-five percent of those who visited the library this past year took out a book, more than half used reference materials, and almost half read newspapers or magazines. Twenty percent of library visitors checked out records or films, 18 percent heard a speaker or saw a film, and 6 percent took a class. Just a quarter of the library users tried to get the answer to a specific question.

When people were asked about their interest in newer library services, "people to provide information on the phone" generated the highest interest among the respondents. This was followed closely by "a computer which can be used to search for information on books you want." About 35 percent said they would be "extremely" or "very" interested in getting help to improve their reading skills.

Respondents aged eighteen to thirty-four were twice as likely to use the library more than eleven times a year than people fifty

and over, according to the new study, and heavy readers are four times as likely to be frequent library visitors.

Over half the respondents said they almost always get what they want from the library, while one out of four said they usually get what they want. The highest level of dissatisfaction noted was "the availability of technical books," and 22 percent of heavy library users mentioned this area.

Almost all heavy library users said they were "satisfied with the help provided by librarians." Hours that the library is open and the number of copies of popular books available were the next most frequently cited areas of dissatisfaction by heavy library users.

School Libraries/Reading

Almost three quarters of the respondents with an oldest child of school age said the library is frequently used by that child, and almost all said the school library was important for that child's education. While over half said their oldest child's library was equipped with films, tapes, and records, almost a third said they did not know.

The vast majority of respondents said their oldest child was reading at or above grade level; 13 percent said their oldest child was reading below grade level.

Women between the ages of thirty-five and forty-nine are most likely to visit the public library with their children, but overall, 37 percent of the respondents make joint visits with their children.

While 38 percent of the respondents interviewed say they read to their children under seven every day, about the same number say they read less frequently if at all. Ten percent say they never read to their young children.

What Americans Are Reading

About one out of three American adults read a book a month or more, and almost a quarter read about two or more. Women are more likely than men to read upward of fifty books a year, and these extremely heavy readers are apt to be young (eighteen to thirty-four) and be college educated. A large percentage of women are also likely to have borrowed the last book they read from a friend or relative.

Fiction is the major American reading fare: half of all those who have read a book in the last year said their most recent selection was a novel; 35 percent were reading non-fiction and 7 percent a book on how to do something.

Romantic novels, like *The Thorn Birds* by Colleen McCullough, and historical romances are the country's favorite fiction. However, the Bible and a variety of inspirational books scored just as high.

Tales of disaster, horror, and the supernatural came in a strong second among fiction most recently read. The American public was also awash in the deep this summer, with *Jaws* and *Jaws II* claiming a good percentage of readers.

Books by J. R. R. Tolkien drew the most mentions of any one author. In non-fiction, World War II and books on Nazi Germany attracted the most readers. The scandal of Watergate is still on the minds of many Americans judging by the variety of books on the subject mentioned by respondents.

Americans are also reading the classics, as the ALA study shows. Works by Dickens, Tolstoy, D. H. Lawrence, Flaubert, Hawthorne, and Huxley dotted the list of most recently read volumes.

Recent decades' best sellers are still winning readers: *Gone With the Wind, Catcher in the Rye, Rebecca,* and *Catch 22* were all being read during the summer months, according to the new study.

To no one's surprise, running was the subject of most of the sports books mentioned, and money and how to get it, the focus of many self-help books.

Americans clearly like to get to the nub of a story quickly. A series of books which condenses popular fiction and non-fiction was a recurring favorite among the respondents.

TV and Reading

About a quarter of the respondents said television influenced a book selection during the past year and *Roots* was the most cited example. Women are more likely than men to select a book because of what they have seen on television, according to the survey.

About half of the parents interviewed believe that watching less television would encourage their children to read more, but almost as many (45 percent) say they believe watching less television would have no effect on reading.

Commenting on the survey results, ALA Executive Director Robert Wedgeworth said, "We are still studying the implications of the responses, and expect to have commentary available for White House Conference participants and for the library community later this fall.

"Responses to several of our questions support our concern with functional illiteracy. Thirteen percent of parents said their children were reading below grade level in our study, a figure that correlates exactly with findings from a recent study conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Projected nationally, the number of young people reading 'below grade level' runs into the millions.

"It would be hard to sustain the idea that television is viewed by the public as a major barrier to reading. Almost half of adults

said they would read about the same amount if they watched less television.

"High satisfaction with library use, and desire to see services kept intact must be contrasted with the growing demand for property tax cuts. This is a problem the library community and the public will have to deal with in the years to come," Wedgeworth noted.

The Gallup study was conducted by telephone during the months of July and August.